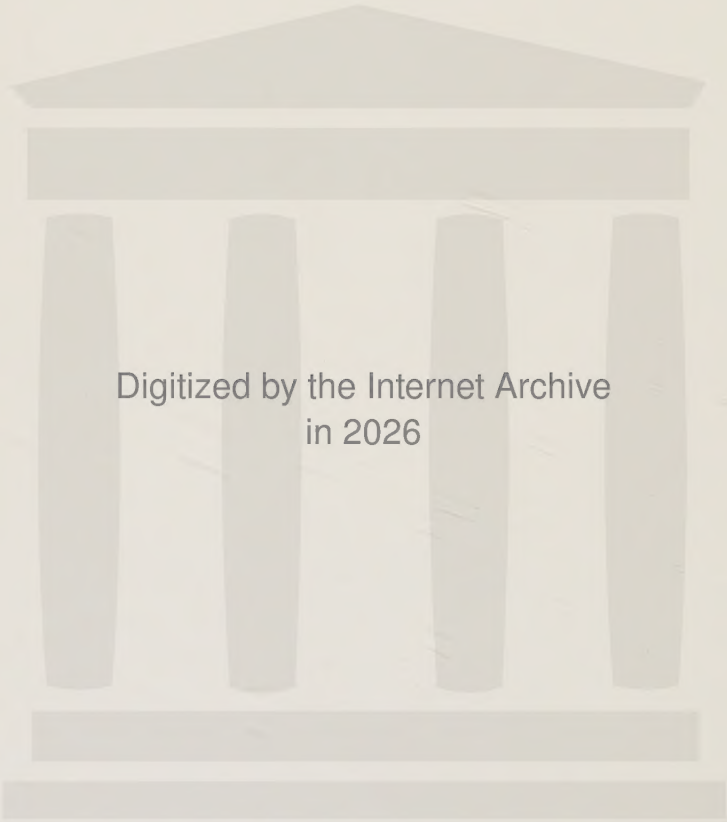
LIBRARY
OF THE
SAN FRANCISCO THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
SAN ANSELMO
CALIFORNIA


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/miltonashistoria0000chfi

MILTON AS AN HISTORIAN

By C. H. FIRTH

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

Read November 25, 1908.

PR
3579
F5

MILTON AS AN HISTORIAN

By C. H. FIRTH

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

Read November 25, 1908.

Few people ever think of Milton as an historian. His interest in history is revealed to his readers by some similes in *Paradise Lost*,[1] and by those great passages in *Paradise Regained* embodying his conception of Roman rule and Athenian culture,[2] but his historical writings are of such slight importance compared to his pamphlets and his poetry, that they are almost forgotten. Yet Milton's *History of Britain* is worth studying. It elucidates both his political writings and his poems; like all that he wrote, it bears the impress of his character, and is, therefore, of some biographical value; finally, the book in itself is a work of learning and originality, worthy to be remembered in any account of the development of historical writing in England.

The full title of the book is 'The History of Britain, that part especially now called England, from the first traditional Beginning continued to the Norman Conquest. Collected out of the antientest and best authors thereof by John Milton.'[3] It was published in 1670 by James Allestry, as a quarto volume of about 350 pages, costing five shillings. Eleven years later, in 1681, appeared a little pamphlet of twelve pages, entitled 'Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament and the Assembly of Divines', which purported to be a passage of the *History* suppressed by the licenser when the book was published, and is usually inserted in modern editions at the beginning of the third part of the *History*.[4]

The early history of Britain had long occupied Milton's mind. We can trace the progress of his studies and the growth of his schemes up to the moment when he began to write the book which some four-and-twenty years later he gave to the world. The notes contained in his Common-place Book (written apparently in the interval between leaving Cambridge in 1632 and visiting Italy in 1638) prove that he had carefully read the Chronicles of Holinshed,

[1] *Paradise Lost*, i. 351–5; x. 306–11. [2] *Paradise Regained*, Book iv.

[3] See Masson's *Life of Milton*, vi. 642–8; Arber, *The Term Catalogues*, i. 277, 443.

[4] Milton's *Prose Works*, ed. Mitford, iii. 94–101; Masson, vi. 906–12.

Stow, and Speed,[1] as well as several foreign historians.[2] It is clear that at that time the 'first traditional beginning' of British history attracted him most, and twice in the Latin verses written during the year 1639 he expressed his resolve to make these legends the subject of an epic poem. In the *Epitaphium Damonis* he declared that his future theme should be the coming of the Trojans, and the fortunes of the line of Brutus:

> 'Ipse ego Dardanias Rutupina per aequora puppes
> Dicam, et Pandrasidos regnum vetus Inogeniae,
> Brennumque Arviragumque duces, priscumque Belinum,
> Et tandem Armoricos Britonum sub lege colonos;
> Tum gravidam Arturo fatali fraude Iögernen,
> Mendaces vultus, assumptaque Gorlois arma,
> Merlini dolus.'[3]

In the *Epistle to Mansus*, written a few months earlier, his chosen theme was to be the life of King Arthur:

> 'Si quando indigenas revocabo in carmina reges,
> Arturumque etiam sub terris bella moventem,
> Aut dicam invictae sociali foedere mensae
> Magnanimos Heroas et (O modo spiritus adsit)
> Frangam Saxonicas Britonum sub Marte phalanges.'[4]

Once more, in 1642, in his fourth pamphlet, he returned to his project. It was his purpose, he declared, to add to the fame of his native country by his writings. Hitherto its history had been meanly written. 'If the Athenians made their small deeds great and renowned by their eloquent writers, England hath had her noble achievements made small by the unskilful handling of monks and mechanics.'[5] To him it appeared that 'our own ancient stories' supplied fit matter for a poem, and he was deliberating over the

[1] *A Common-place Book of John Milton*, ed. by A. H. Horwood, pp. 9, 10, 22, 25, 27, 31; cf. Masson, *Life of Milton*, i. 303, 645, 736, vi. 790.

[2] In Milton's *Apology for Smectymnuus*, published in 1642, he speaks of his early historical reading: 'Some years I spent in stories of those Greek and Roman exploits, wherein I found many things both nobly done and worthily spoken.' He explains that when he came to the period of Constantine the Great the history of the Church proved intolerably repulsive. *Prose Works*, i. 269, 318.

[3] *Epitaphium Damonis*, ll. 162–8; Masson, *Life of Milton*, ii. 84–94. Dated by Masson about October, 1639.

[4] *Mansus*, ll. 80–4; Masson, *Life*, i. 524.

[5] Milton is here referring to an observation made by Sallust: 'Atheniensium res gestae, sicuti ego aestumo, satis amplae magnificaeque fuere, verum aliquanto minores tamen quam fama feruntur, sed quia provenere ibi scriptorum magna ingenia, per terrarum orbem Atheniensium facta pro maxumis celebrantur.' —Sallust, *Catiline*, 8.

question 'what king or knight before the Conquest might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero.'[1]

One doubt, however, was still unresolved: whether it was best to adopt for his poem the epic or the dramatic form, and which of the two would be 'more doctrinal and exemplary' to his countrymen. For some time a tragedy with a chorus, after the antique model, had seemed the form best suited for his purpose, and about 1640 he jotted down on paper a long list of possible subjects, with brief notes as to the way of treating them. Of these subjects, numbering ninety-nine in all, sixty-one were scriptural and thirty-eight from British history, and it is noticeable that the subjects of the British tragedies were chosen not from the legendary period, but the times between the Roman conquest and the year 1066.[2]

None of these various schemes was realized in the form in which it was first conceived. The tragedy of 'Adam Unparadised' became ultimately the epic of *Paradise Lost*; the epic on Arthur and the 'British Tragedies' developed into the prose *History of Britain.*

We can trace with tolerable accuracy the progress of the *History of Britain.* Milton began to write it after the conclusion of the series of pamphlets on divorce (March 1645), and after the close of the first Civil War (June 1646). It is probable that by the end of 1647 he had completed the first and second books, since the original introduction to the third book must have been written, judging from its tone, about the close of 1647 or the beginning of 1648. It is certain, on Milton's own evidence, that by March 1649, when he became Secretary to the Council of State, he had finished four out of the six books, and had brought the story down to the union of England under the rule of Egbert. He tells us that he then intended to relate the history of England from its first beginnings to his own day.[3] But this intention was never fulfilled. At some period after 1649 Milton wrote the fifth and the sixth books, which contain the story of the Danish invasions and the Norman conquest, but he proceeded no further. His blindness proved no doubt too great an obstacle.[4]

[1] Masson, ii. 361, 385; *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty. Prose Works*, i. 145.

[2] Ibid., 106; Aldis Wright, pp. 35, 36.

[3] He says: 'ad historiam gentis, ab ultima origine repetitam, ad haec usque tempora, si possem, perpetuo filo deducendam, me converti.' *Defensio Secunda*, Mitford's ed. of Milton's *Prose Works*, iv. 293.

[4] Milton probably resumed the *History of Britain* about the end of 1655, since he published his *Pro Se Defensio* in August 1655, and, having completed the Salmasius controversy, had time at his disposal. 'Being now quiet from State adversaries and public contests,' says Phillips, 'he had leisure again for his own studies and private designs.' In March 1657 he was inquiring about the cost of

The purpose which Milton set before himself when he began to write is clearly explained in the exordium to his *History*:

'The beginning of nations, those excepted of whom sacred books have spoken, is to this day unknown. Nor only the beginning, but the deeds of many succeeding ages, yea, periods of ages, either wholly unknown, or obscured and blemished with fables. . . . Of British affairs, from the first peopling of the island to the coming of Julius Caesar, nothing certain, either by tradition, history, or ancient fame, hath hitherto been left us. That which we have of oldest seeming, hath by the greater part of judicious antiquaries been long rejected for a modern fable.

'Nevertheless, there being others, besides the first supposed author, men not unread, nor unlearned in antiquity, who admit that for approved story which the former explode for fiction; and seeing that ofttimes relations heretofore accounted fabulous have been after found to contain in them many footsteps and reliques of something true, as what we read in poets of the flood, and giants little believed, till undoubted witnesses taught us that all was not feigned; I have therefore determined to bestow the telling over even of these reputed tales; be it for nothing else but in favour of our English poets and rhetoricians, who by their art will know how to use them judiciously.

'. . . I intend not with controversies and quotations to delay or interrupt the smooth course of history; much less to argue and debate long who were the first inhabitants, with what probabilities, what authorities each opinion hath been upheld; but shall endeavour that which hitherto hath been needed most, with plain and lightsome brevity, to relate well and orderly things worth the noting, so as may best instruct and benefit them that read.'[1]

It is evident that for the moment the truth of the facts related was less important in Milton's eyes than the manner in which they were related. History meant to him, when he began, merely the art of story-telling. As he hinted, the early history of England had been lengthily and tediously told in the ponderous volumes of his predecessors. In Holinshed's *Chronicle* 202 pages are required to reach the battle of Hastings, out of which 22 pages are devoted to the legendary period before the landing of Caesar. Speed expends

editions of Byzantine historians, which is evidence that his mind was once more turned to historical studies (see Masson, *Life of Milton*, v. 225, 284).

There is also another piece of evidence. On pp. 273, 287 of his *History* he refers to 'the Chronicle attributed to John Brompton, a Yorkshire Abbot, but rather of some nameless author living under Edward III or later'. This chronicle was first published in Twysden's *Decem Scriptores* in 1652 as 'Chronicon Johannis Brompton Abbatis Jorvalensis'. Milton no doubt used the edition of Simeon of Durham included in the same collection. He often refers to that author in the two latter books of the *History* and towards the end of Book IV.

[1] *History of Britain*, ed. 1670, pp. 1–3.

411 pages and 41 pages respectively on those two divisions of his subject.[1] Milton, on the other hand, contrives to cover the legendary period in 30 pages, and to complete his whole story in 308 pages, and these are quarto pages containing not much more than three hundred words, while the pages of Holinshed and Speed are folios printed in double columns. One page of Holinshed contains as many words as four pages of Milton, and in lightness of touch, as well as brevity, Milton as a story-teller exceeds either Holinshed, Speed, or Stow.

The legends which formed the staple of early British history had already been told and retold by many Elizabethan and Jacobean poets. Spenser in the second book of the *Faerie Queene* had versified in some six hundred lines the story of the landing of Brutus and the fortunes of his descendants up to Uther Pendragon.[2] Milton quotes a stanza from his version.[3] Drayton interspersed the thirty 'Songs' of his *Polyolbion*, wherever a legend could be localized, with narratives of British or Saxon monarchs which hill tells to hill and river certifies to river. In the first song of all the Dart claims the royalty of all the streams in the West because Brutus landed at her mouth, 'which now the envious world doth slander as a dream.'[4] It is to Drayton and Spenser that Milton alludes when he recites his story of the wrestling match between Corineus and the giant Goemagog, terming it 'a grand fable though dignified by our best poets'.[5]

Minor poets, too, had sought the same inexhaustible storehouse. Higgins, in his additions to *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), Warner in *Albion's England* (1586), Heywood in *Troja Britannica* (1609), and Slatyer in *Palaeo-Albion* (1621), all had found material for their art in the mythical history of Britain. Nor had the dramatists, from the author of *Gorboduc* to the author of *Lear* and *Cymbeline*, been behindhand in employing plots from the same source in tragedies or chronicle plays. Whether Milton believed these stories or not, their familiarity and their attractiveness made it impossible for him to pass them over in silence.

[1] The computation is based on the edition of Holinshed of 1586, and the 1632 edition of Speed. Milton, as his Common-place Book shows, used this edition of Holinshed and the 1631 edition of Stow.

[2] Book II, canto x.

[3] Ibid., x, l. 212; *History of Britain*, p. 16.

[4] *Polyolbion*, ed. 1613, p. 8. Drayton is a convinced believer in the Brutus legend. Selden, in the notes, argues for it 'as an advocate for the Muse', but not 'if alleged for my own opinion'. See pp. 17, 93, 162, and the address 'from the author of the Illustrations' prefixed.

[5] *History of Britain*, p. 13; *Faerie Queene*, II. x. 92; *Polyolbion*, p. 12.

Moreover, they had a great attraction for Milton himself, even if his judgement rejected them as fictitious. In *Comus* he had already utilized the story of Sabrina, the 'virgin daughter of Locrine', who gave her name to the Severn, and he now told it once more in prose.[1] The space devoted in the *History of Britain* to the story of Lear and Cordelia is probably a tribute to Shakespeare, but the two pages devoted to kings Brennus and Belinus must be explained by the fact that they were to have been personages in the intended epic.[2]

It is not only by his treatment of the mythical period of English history that Milton's interest in the legendary and anecdotic side of history is revealed. It appears in the later books as well as the earlier, and the introduction of certain episodes or the space devoted to them may often be explained by their inclusion in the list of suggested subjects for his 'British Tragedies'. The story of Queen Eadburga, the vision of King Edwin, Athelstan's murder of his brother and his repentance, are cases in point.[3] But the most remarkable instance is the narrative of King Edgar's marriage with Elfrida, and of another love adventure of that king's which Milton himself styles 'fitter for a novel than a history'.[4] 'Edgar slaying Ethelwold for false play in wooing' had once seemed a good plot for a tragedy. 'Wherein,' noted Milton, 'may be set out his pride and lust, which he thought to cloak by favouring monks and building monasteries; also the disposition of woman in Elfrida towards her husband.'[5]

Another episode treated at somewhat disproportionate length is that of the murder of Aelfred, the second son of Ethelred the Unready, which some authorities attributed to the treachery of Earl Godwin. The explanation of the space given to the story, and of the elaboration with which the statements of conflicting authors about it are set forth, appears to be that Milton once intended to make it the starting-point of a classical tragedy. The first scene of the tragedy of Harold, he had noted, 'may begin with the ghost of Alfred . . . slain in cruel manner by Godwin, Harold's father, his mother and brother dissuading him.'[6]

Here and elsewhere throughout the *History of Britain* the influence of Holinshed's *Chronicle* is plainly perceptible. Alike in the anecdotes inserted and the anecdotes omitted, Milton usually

[1] *Comus*, ll. 824–937; *History of Britain*, p. 15.
[2] Ibid., pp. 17, 22.
[3] Ibid., pp. 184, 224, 289.
[4] Ibid., p. 239.
[5] Masson, *Life of Milton*, ii. 114.
[6] Ibid., p. 114; *History of Britain*, p. 274.

follows in the track of Holinshed (or rather of Abraham Fleming, who wrote that part of Holinshed's compilation). For instance, under the reign of Edward the Confessor Milton relates the stories of the divine judgement upon Godwin, the soldierly death of Siward, and the prophetic vision of Edward the Confessor;[1] all these are to be found in Holinshed, but none of them in Speed or Stow. Similarly, Milton omits the story of Alfred and the cakes, which is omitted by Holinshed though it is told both by Stow and Speed. In the first book of the *History of Britain* the author's obligations to Holinshed are still more evident, nor is it by a mere coincidence that the first sentence of one is an echo of the second sentence in the other. 'The beginning of nations, those excepted of whom sacred books have spoken, is to this day unknown,' writes Milton. 'The original in manner of all nations is doubtful,' wrote the chronicler, 'and even the same for the most part fabulous, that always excepted, which we find in the Holy Scriptures.'[2]

On the other hand, Milton's was too vigorous and too independent a mind to adopt implicitly the conclusions of any previous writer. He had read Stow and Speed as well as Holinshed, and seems from his notes to have compared their narratives. At a later stage he read what original authorities he could obtain for the period from the coming of the Romans to the Norman Conquest, and tested the statements of the chroniclers by their aid. Many statements and theories which the chroniclers had accepted he dismissed as unfounded or improbable when he came to write.

Holinshed (or rather Abraham Fleming) begins the history of Britain, about the time of the flood, with the rule of Samothes, the sixth son of Japhet, and his sons, and the subjugation of the island about three hundred years later by the giant Albion, the son of Neptune. Milton, with Stow and Speed, rejects this story, calling it 'an outlandish figment', and condemning 'those of our own writers who thought they had done nothing unless with all circumstance they tell us when and who first set foot upon this island.'[3]

Holinshed and Stow both accept with implicit faith the Brutus legend. The latter intercalates in his narrative 'A briefe Proofe of Brute', showing how many learned men affirm this history, and denounces Polydore Vergil for denying it. This man, he complains, 'with one dash of a pen cashiereth three score princes with all their

[1] *History of Britain*, pp. 290, 291, 298.
[2] Ibid., p. 1. Holinshed, ed. 1587; Bk. I, p. 1.
[3] Ibid., p. 4.

histories and historians; yea, and some ancient laws also.'[1] On the other hand, Speed states, with convincing clearness and great elaboration, the arguments against the legend. 'As France,' he concludes, 'hath cast off their Francio king Priamus his son, Scotland their Scotia king Pharoes' daughter, Denmark their Danus, Ireland their Hiberus, and other countries their demigods, so let Britaines likewise with them disclaim their Brute.'[2]

Milton endeavours to hold the balance between absolute credulity and complete rejection. He will not follow Speed the whole way:

'Of Brutus and his line with the whole progeny of kings, to the entrance of Julius Caesar, we cannot so easily be discharged; descents of ancestry, long continued, laws and exploits not seeming to be borrowed or devised, which on the common belief have wrought no small impression; defended by many, denied utterly by few. For what though Brutus and the whole Trojan pretence were yielded up . . . yet those old and inborn names of successive kings, never any to have been real persons, or done in their lives at least some part of what so long hath been remembered, cannot be thought without too strict an incredulity.

'For these, and those causes above mentioned, that which hath received approbation from many, I have chosen not to omit. Certain or uncertain, be that upon the credit of those whom I must follow; so far as keeps aloof from impossible and absurd, attested by ancient writers from books more ancient, I refuse not, as the due and proper subject of story.'[3]

Another series of legends clustered round the introduction of Christianity into Britain. It was said that Simon Zelotes or Joseph of Arimathaea had preached Christianity in this country during the reign of Nero, and that about the year 177 when Lucius was king of Britain the whole island accepted the faith. A letter of Pope Eleutherius to the king was quoted in support of the facts; Lucius was canonized as the first British saint, and it became the accepted belief of English historians that the British nation was the first to make public profession of Christianity. Holinshed, Stow, and even the critical Speed, with some differences as to the details, all accepted these stories. Milton relates them, but he does so with obvious scepticism, and concludes: 'Of these matters, variously written and believed, ecclesiastic historians can best determine: as the best of them do, with little credit given to such uncertain relations.'[4]

[1] Stow's *Chronicle*, ed. 1631, p. 6 and preface. [2] Speed, pp. 14–20.

[3] *History of Britain*, p. 6.

[4] Ibid., p. 80; Holinshed, i. 37, 51; Speed, pp. 73–81, 103; Stow, p. 38. Fuller, *Church History*, ed. 1655, p. 9. Milton was indifferent to this claim,

Milton shows the same scepticism about the popular belief that Constantine the Great was of British descent. 'There goes a fame,' he says, 'and that seconded by most of our own historians, though not those the ancientest, that Constantine was born in this island, his mother Helena the daughter of Coilus, a British prince.' He proceeds to point out a few improbabilities, and to summarize the evidence of the Roman authorities against it. Here again he is more difficult to satisfy than Speed, who accepts the tradition, quoting, in answer to unbelievers, the opinion of 'Time's chief secretary, the learned Camden' in its favour.[1]

Milton's treatment of the Arthurian legend is a still more interesting example of the progress of scepticism. The three chroniclers who were the standard historians of Milton's time all doubted the details of the legend, but believed that Arthur was a real king who gained genuine victories. 'Of this Arthur,' says Holinshed's *Chronicle*, 'many things are written beyond credit, for that there is no ancient author of authority that confirmeth the same; but surely as may be thought he was some worthy man, and by all likelihood a great enemy to the Saxons, by reason whereof the Welshmen, which are the very Britons indeed, have him in famous remembrance.' Then at great length he relates the legendary life and exploits of the hero.[2]

Stow is briefer, but adopts much the same position. 'Of this Arthur there be many fabulous reports, but certain he was (saith William of Malmesbury) a prince more worthy to have advancement by true histories than false fables, being the only prop and upholder of his country.' He supports the truth of the story by identifying the sites of Mon Badonicus and the Castle of Camelot, and describing the remains found there.[3] The critical Speed quotes Malmesbury

holding it a greater glory that Wicliffe, the beginner of the Reformation, was an Englishman: 'England having had this grace and honour from God to be the first that should set up a standard for the recovery of lost truth, and blow the first evangelic trumpet to the nations.' *Of Reformation, Prose Works*, i. 5. Archbishop Parker firmly believed in the Lucius legend, and also did Cardinal Pole; Strype's *Parker*, i. 139, 467; iii. 247.

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 89; Speed, p. 156; Holinshed, pp. 62, 63. Gibbon summarizes the question in a sentence: 'This tradition, unknown to the contemporaries of Constantine, was invented in the darkness of the monasteries, was embellished by Jeffrey of Monmouth and the writers of the twelfth century, has been defended by our antiquarians of the last age, and is seriously related in the ponderous history of England compiled by Mr. Carte' (vol. i, p. 147).—*Decline and Fall*, ed. Bury, p. 397.

[2] Holinshed, i. 90–3.

[3] Stow, pp. 53–5.

too, and condemns Geoffrey of Monmouth for discrediting the truth about Arthur by his toys and tales. 'Of his person,' he concludes, 'we make no doubt, though his acts have been written with too lavish a pen.'[1]

Milton is much more thoroughgoing. All that happened about that time is doubtful. 'The age whereof we now write hath had the ill hap more than any since the first fabulous times, to be surcharged with all the idle fancies of posterity.' He introduces Arthur by describing him as a British leader, 'more renowned in songs and romances than true stories.' With real insight he dismisses at once the mediaeval fictions and examines the account of Nennius as the only evidence of any real value:

'Who Arthur was, and whether ever any such reigned in Britain, hath been doubted heretofore, and may again with good reason. For the monk of Malmesbury and others, whose credit hath swayed most with the learneder sort, we may well perceive to have known no more of this Arthur five hundred years past, nor of his doings, than we now living; and what they had to say, transcribed out of Nennius, a very trivial writer yet extant, which hath already been related; or out of a British book, the same which he of Monmouth set forth, utterly unknown to the world, till more than six hundred years after the days of Arthur, of whom (as Sigebert in his chronicle confesses) all other histories were silent, both foreign and domestic, except only that fabulous book. Others of later time have sought to assert him by old legends and cathedral regests. But he who can accept of legends for good story, may quickly swell a volume with trash, and had need be furnished with two only necessaries, leisure and belief; whether it be the writer, or he that shall read.'[2]

'As to Arthur,' he continues, 'no less is in doubt who was his father,' and then proceeds to demolish Uther Pendragon: 'And as we doubted of his parentage, so may we also of his puissance; for whether that victory at Badon-hill were his or no is uncertain.' All he will concede is that, 'whether by Arthur won, or whensoever,' that battle 'seems indeed to have given a most undoubted and important blow to the Saxons and to have stopped their proceedings for a good while after.'[3]

When we compare Milton's treatment of this with that of Holinshed, Stow, and Speed, his superiority is evident. Alter the phraseology, and he might have been writing in the nineteenth rather than the seventeenth century. For his conclusions are roughly those

[1] Speed, p. 271.

[2] *History of Britain* p. 122.

[3] Ibid., pp. 119, 122, 124.

of modern scholars, and his reasoning practically that of a scientific historian.[1]

Here, as in many other places, Milton's *History* helps to explain his poetry. One of the reasons for the abandonment of the intended epic on the story of Arthur was that his studies had convinced him there was no more truth in it than there was in the story of Brutus. When he referred later to the Arthurian legends he was careful to emphasize their fictitious character. He speaks of

> 'What resounds
> In fable or romance of Uther's son,
> Begirt with British and Armoric knights':

or of

> 'Ladies that seemed
> Fairer than feigned of old, or fabled since
> Of faery damsels met in forest wide
> By knights of Logres, or of Lyones,
> Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellenore.'[2]

It was not in these legends of 'fabled knights' and 'battles feigned' that he could find the substance of his 'heroic song',[3] nor was it through them that he could convey the ethical teaching which it was the office of the poet to give.

As we have already pointed out, Milton's *History* is not entirely a compilation from the standard historians of his day, but is also based upon a considerable study of the original sources accessible when he wrote. He begins by endeavouring to form an opinion of the value of the authorities for each particular period taken collectively, and supplements this by incidental estimates of individual authors.

For the legends of the prae-Roman period he says at the outset: 'The principal author is well known to be Geoffrey of Monmouth; what he was and whence his authority, who in his age or before him have delivered the same matter, and such like general discourses, will better stand in a treatise by themselves.'[4] The treatise was never written, but we can gather Milton's opinion of Geoffrey's credibility from his rejection of his statements, and from disparaging references to his fables and untruths.[5] Authentic history, Milton declares at the close of his first book, begins with the coming of the Romans.

[1] Hodgkin, *Political History of England*, i. 104–5, 107; Ramsay, *Foundations of England*, i. 124–5, 135.

[2] *Paradise Lost*, i. 579; *Paradise Regained*, ii. 357.

[3] *Paradise Lost*, ix. 27–40.

[4] *History of Britain*, p. 6.

[5] Ibid., pp. 24, 28, 47, 54, 79, 84, 103, 144.

'By this time, like one who had set out on his way by night, and travelled through a region of smooth or idle dreams, our history now arrives on the confines where daylight and truth meet us with a clear dawn, representing to our view, though at a far distance, true colours and shapes. For albeit Caesar, whose authority we are now first to follow, wanted not who taxed him of misrepresenting in his Commentaries, yea, in his Civil War against Pompey, much more, may we think, in the British affairs, of whose little skill in writing he did not easily hope to be contradicted; yet now in such variety of good authors, we hardly can miss, from one hand or other, to be sufficiently informed, as of things past so long ago.'[1]

'... The only authors we have of British matters while the power of Rome reached hither' are Roman authors 'who in the Latin tongue have laid together as much and perhaps more than was required to a history of Britain.' The story they tell is 'a story of much truth', and for the first hundred years and more it may be 'collected without much labour'. For the most part 'little seems to be required above transcription', although something may be added by diligence and explained by the arrangement of the facts. Towards the end of the period, however, 'the Roman empire declining apace, good historians growing scarce or lost, have left us little but fragments for many years ensuing.'[2]

When the Roman empire fell, darkness settled down again; learning and history, and even language itself, decayed with it:

'Henceforth we are to steer by another sort of authors; near enough to the things they write, as in their own country, if that would serve; in time not much belated, some of equal age; in expression barbarous, and to say how judicious, I suspend awhile: this we must expect; in civil matters to find them dubious relaters, and still to the best advantage of what they term the Holy Church, meaning indeed themselves: in most other matters of religion, blind, astonished, and struck with superstition as with a planet; in one word, Monks. Yet these guides, where can be had no better, must be followed; in gross, it may be true enough; in circumstances each man, as his judgement gives him, may reserve his faith, or bestow it.'[3]

One of these monks was Bede, the chief authority, says Milton, for the period from the coming of the Saxons to 731, but even he could not make it intelligible:

'Beda surceased to write. Out of whom chiefly has been gathered, since the Saxon's arrival, such as hath been delivered, a scattered story picked out here and there, with some trouble and tedious work, from among his many legends of visions and miracles; toward the

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 29. [2] Ibid., pp. 31, 33, 84. [3] Ibid., p. 97.

latter end so bare of civil matters, as what can be thence collected may seem a calendar rather than a history, taken up for the most part with succession of kings, and a computation of years, yet those hard to be reconciled with the Saxon annals. Their actions we read of were most commonly wars, but for what cause waged, or by what councils carried on, no care was had to let us know; whereby their strength and violence we understand, of their wisdom, reason, or justice, little or nothing, the rest superstition and monastical affectation; kings one after another leaving their kingly charge, to run their heads fondly into a monk's cowl; which leaves us uncertain whether Beda was wanting to his matter, or his matter to him.'[1]

Yet whatever Bede's defects might be he was a better guide than the authors on whom it was necessary to depend for the following period:

'From hence to the Danish invasion it will be worse with us, destitute of Beda. Left only to obscure and blockish chronicles; whom Malmesbury, and Huntingdon (for neither they nor we had better authors of those times), ambitious to adorn the history, make no scruple ofttimes, I doubt, to interline with conjectures and surmises of their own; them rather than imitate, I shall choose to represent the truth naked, though as lean as a plain journal. Yet William of Malmesbury must be acknowledged, both for style and judgement, to be by far the best writer of them all; but what labour is to be endured turning over volumes of rubbish in the rest, Florence of Worcester, Huntingdon, Simeon of Durham, Hoveden, Matthew of Westminster, and many others of obscurer note, with all their monachisms, is a penance to think. Yet these are our only registers, transcribers one after another for the most part, and sometimes worthy enough of the things they register. This travail, rather than not to know at once what may be known of our ancient story, sifted from fables and impertinences, I voluntarily undergo; and to save others, if they please, the like unpleasing labour.'[2]

At intervals during the later part of his narrative Milton characterizes or criticizes particular authors more fully. Malmesbury, though the best, had other defects besides those mentioned. 'He refused not the authority of ballads for want of better' and inserted stories he confessed 'to be sung in old songs not read in warrantable authors'.[3] Besides, he was too much biased in favour of monks and kings who loved monks, and against the secular clergy. Henry of Huntingdon was not to be trusted unless he was confirmed by some other authority: 'little credit is to be placed in Huntingdon single.' He was too imaginative. 'His manner is to comment upon the Annal text' (that is, the *Saxon Chronicle*) and to add fictitious details of the

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 172. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., pp. 224, 229.

events recorded 'describing the manner of those battles and encounters, which they who compare and can judge of books may be confident he never found in any current author whom he had to follow'.[1]

Of the value of the 'Saxon Annals', as Milton terms the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, he has a very just conception. 'These I take . . . to be the chief foundation of our story, the ground and basis upon which the monks in later times gloss and comment at their pleasure.' But to understand them and make out the real significance of the Annals was a very difficult task. Sometimes their record of events was 'without coherence of sense or story'. Alfred's wars with the Danes 'are set down so perplexedly by the Saxon annalist, ill gifted with utterance, as with much ado can be understood sometimes what is spoken of whether meant of the Danes or of the Saxons'. For instance, it is impossible to say who won the battle of Merton, 'so darkly do the Saxon Annals deliver their meaning with more than wonted infancy.' Poetical passages, such as the ballads on the battles of Brunanburh and Maldon completely baffled and somewhat enraged Milton. Of the former he says: 'The Saxon annalist, wont to be sober and succinct, whether the same or another writer, now labouring under the weight of his argument, and overcharged, runs on a sudden into such extravagant fancies and metaphors as bear him quite beside the scope of being understood. . . . I shall only sum up what of him I can attain in usual language.'[2]

Milton endeavoured to supplement the scantiness of the English sources by the help of foreign historians, but got little satisfaction from them. He searched the *Rerum Danicarum Historia* of J. J. Pontanus for information about the Danish invasion, but found nothing of any value. As to the ninth century 'of all these terrible landings and devastations by the Danes . . . or of their leaders whether kings, dukes, or earls, the Danish history of best credit saith nothing; so little wit or conscience they had to leave any memory of their brutish rather than manly actions'. As to the tenth century: 'The Danish history, at least their latest and diligentest historian, as neither from the first landing of the Danes, in the reign of West Saxon Brithric, so now again contributed nothing; busied more than enough to make out the bare names and successors of their uncertain kings, and their small actions at home; unless out of him I should transcribe what he takes, and I better may, from our own annals.'[3]

[1] *History of Britain*, pp. 122, 175, 211. [2] Ibid., pp. 203, 211, 212, 225.
[3] Ibid., pp. 179, 192, 244.

When Milton turned to the Scottish historians for facts about the invasion of the Picts and Scots the result was still more disappointing, for he found nothing but pure fiction. George Buchanan, he complains, in his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, 'departs not much from the fables of his predecessor Boethius' (i. e. Hector Boece); 'with no less exactness of particular circumstances he takes upon him to relate all those tumultuary inroads of the Scots and Picts into Britain, as if they had but yesterday happened, their order of battle, manner of fight, number of slain, articles of peace, things whereof Gildas and Beda are utterly silent, authors to whom the Scotch writers have none to cite comparable in antiquity; no more therefore to be believed for bare assertions, however quaintly dressed, than our Geoffrey of Monmouth, when he varies most from authentic story. But either the inbred vanity of some, in that respect unworthily called historians, or the fond zeal of praising their nations above truth, hath so far transported them, that where they find nothing faithfully to relate, they fall confidently to invent what they think may either best set off their history, or magnify their country.' It was amusing when 'our neighbour historian' gravely reprehended Geoffrey of Monmouth and others 'for fabling in the deeds of Arthur; yet what he writes thereof himself as of better credit, shows not whence he had but from those fables which he seems content to believe in part on condition that the Scots and Picts may be thought to have assisted Arthur in all his wars and achievements; whereof appears as little ground by credible story as of that which he most counts for fabulous'.[1]

Another modern author of whom Milton made constant use was Camden. Whenever the locality of a battle had to be fixed, or the modern name of a place given, it was naturally to Camden's *Britannia* that he turned. The spot where Caesar landed, the ford by which he crossed the Thames, the site of the camp of Caractacus, the position of the Roman wall, and other topographical facts mentioned were all derived from the same source. These questions of identification did not interest Milton much; he contented himself with briefly giving the necessary minimum of information on such points without interrupting the narrative by discussions. If they could not be identified he preferred to omit them. He did not care, he said, 'to wrinkle the smoothness of history with the rugged names of places unknown better harped at in Camden and other chorographers'.[2]

[1] *History of Britain*, pp. 103, 126, 185.

[2] Ibid., pp. 36, 45, 56, 77, 78, 83, 160, 178. Milton also refers to Spelman's *Concilia*, p. 143.

Milton's method of combining and comparing the statements he found in the various authorities he used deserves notice. At the outset he had declared 'I intend not with controversies and quotations to interrupt the smooth course of history.'[1] But these words referred, as the context shows and his later practice proves, merely to the legendary period covered in the first book. He declined to waste labour 'in computing or collating years and chronologies' when he was dealing with the reigns of the progeny of Brutus, because it was absurd 'to be vainly curious about the time and circumstances of things, whereof the substance is so much in doubt'.[2] In the later books where his authorities were more trustworthy and he was dealing with historical events, it was worth while to discuss dates, to point out discrepancies, and to attempt to reconcile statements. The task, he admitted, was laborious, but he did not shrink from it. 'This travail, rather than not to know at once what may be known of our ancient story, sifted from fables and impertinences, I voluntarily undergo; and to save others, if they please, the like unpleasing labour.'[3]

Milton's favourite method, in the later books, is to place the different stories of his authorities side by side, and conclude by saying which account seems most probable. For instance, in relating the division of England between Canute and Edmund Ironside, he summarizes first Malmesbury's account, then that of Huntingdon, finally that of Matthew of Westminster. As to the accession of Edward the Confessor he gives the versions of Huntingdon, Malmesbury, and Brompton in succession, prefacing them with the remark, 'It may seem a wonder that our historians, if they deserve the name, should in a matter so remarkable and so near their own time so much differ.' He inclines to accept William of Malmesbury's version. In another instance, dealing with Harold's visit to William of Normandy, he sets side by side the statements of five authors, Malmesbury, Ingulf, Eadmer, Simeon of Durham, and Matthew Paris. 'So variously are these things reported' that he finds it impossible to decide.[4]

Incidentally he criticizes with some acuteness Ingulf's story, for, like seventeenth-century historians in general, he accepted his Chronicle of Croyland as a genuine authority. Ingulf had said that Edward the Confessor sent Robert Archbishop of Canterbury to acquaint Duke William with his intention of bequeathing the English crown to him. 'The former part may be true that King Edward upon such considerations had sent one or other, but Archbishop Robert was fled the land, and dead many years before.'[5] In the same way Milton

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 3. [2] Ibid., p. 29. [3] Ibid., p. 173.
[4] Ibid., pp. 265, 278, 295. [5] Ibid., p. 296.

rejects a statement of Simeon of Durham's which describes Uthred, son of the Earl of Northumberland, as fighting against Malcolm of Scotland: 'Here Simeon the relater seems to have committed some mistake, having slain Uthred by Canute two years before and set Eric in his place: Eric therefore it needs must be, not Uthred, who managed this war against the Scots'.[1]

Milton's wide reading showed him that some of the statements he found in his authorities were merely conventional imitations of earlier historians. Speaking of the omens which accompanied William's landing on the English shore, he says, 'These things are related of Alexander and Caesar, and I doubt thence borrowed by the monks to inlay their story.'[2] At other times his good sense prevented him from believing implicitly what others had been content to accept on authority. Holinshed and Speed, for instance, repeat as a fact Malmesbury's statement that the English in Edgar's time owed their vices to 'the too much resort of strangers' to the country, learning rudeness of 'the outlandish Saxons', daintiness of the Flemings, and drunkenness of the Danes. 'I doubt,' comments Milton, 'these vices are as naturally home-bred here as in any of those countries.'[3]

Yet Milton, to use his own phrase, was not 'of too strict an incredulity', and tells us a few lines further, on the authority of Ingulf, 'This year died Swarling, a monk of Croyland, in the hundred and forty-second year of his age, and another soon after him in the hundred and fifteenth; in that fenny and waterish air the more remarkable.'[4]

To conclude this discussion of Milton's treatment of his authorities and his relation to previous historians.

It seems plain that Professor Masson went too far when he described the *History of Britain* as 'not a work of real research or criticism', but 'a mere popular compilation of such matter as was easily at hand'.[5] Milton aimed higher and achieved more than this verdict admits. There is some attempt both at research and at criticism in the book. Milton frequently shows a very true conception of the value of the evidence at his disposal, as well as the independence of judgement one naturally expects from him.

The style also possesses the individuality which marks all Milton's writings. The earlier books are more carefully finished than the later ones. In books four and six Milton seems somewhat weary of his task; he is less attentive to the arrangement of his matter

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 269.
[2] Ibid., p. 303.
[3] Ibid., p. 235.
[4] Ibid., p. 235.
[5] *Life of Milton*, vi. 644.

or the effective statement of what he has to say. In the early part of the *History* he relates a story or describes a scene with a certain deliberate care—not only with touches that reveal the poet, but in the more highly-wrought passages with a certain sententious brevity entirely unlike the fervid and unrestrained diction of his first prose pamphlets. The explanation of this change of style is to be found in Milton's theory of the manner in which history should be written.

His views on the nature of historical writing in general are set forth in two passages in the *History*.

Every age, Milton hints, obtained the historians it deserved, for there was a close relation between the deeds and the written records of the deeds. In certain times, what happened was hardly worth recording. 'Ofttime we see that wise men, and of best ability, have forborn to write the acts of their own days, while they beheld with a just loathing and disdain, not only how unworthy, how perverse, how corrupt, but often how ignoble, how petty, how below all history, the persons and their actions were; who, either by fortune or some rude election, had attained, as a sore judgement and ignominy upon the land, to have chief sway in managing the commonwealth.'[1] Even then there were historians of a sort. 'It is true that in obscurest times, by shallow and unskilful writers, the indistinct noise of many battles and devastations of many kingdoms, overrun and lost, hath come to our ears.' But in such periods of decay true history was hardly possible; and good historians were discouraged. 'When the esteem of science and liberal study waxes low in the commonwealth, we may presume that also there all civil virtue and worthy action is grown as low to a decline: and then eloquence, as it were consorted in the same destiny, with the decrease and fall of virtue, corrupts also and fades; at least resigns her office of relating to illiterate and frivolous historians, such as the persons themselves both deserve, and are best pleased with; whilst they want either the understanding to choose better or the innocence to dare invite the examining and searching style of an intelligent and faithful writer to the survey of their unsound exploits, better befriended by obscurity than fame.'[2]

On the other hand, 'worthy deeds are not often destitute of worthy relaters, as, by a certain fate, great acts and great eloquence have most commonly gone hand in hand, equalling and honouring each other in the same ages.' For great men knew that history was necessary to their greatness.

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 32.

'He whose just and true valour uses the necessity of war and dominion not to destroy, but to prevent destruction, to bring in liberty against tyrants, law and civility among barbarous nations, knowing that when he conquers all things else, he cannot conquer Time or Detraction, wisely conscious of this his want, as well as of his worth not to be forgotten or concealed, honours and hath recourse to the aid of eloquence, his friendliest and best supply; by whose immortal record his noble deeds, which else were transitory, becoming fixed and durable against the force of years and generations, he fails not to continue through all posterity, over Envy, Death and Time also victorious.'[1]

As to the manner in which the historian should relate the deeds he undertook to record, Milton set forth his views in two letters to a young foreign scholar, Henry de Brass.[2]

The model for all historical writers was Sallust. The man who appreciated Sallust had made no small progress in the art of history.[3] 'Dicam libere . . . Sallustium cuivis Latino historico me quidem anteferre; quae etiam constans fere Antiquorum sententia fuit. Habet suas laudes tuus Tacitus; sed eas meo quidem iudicio maximas, quod Sallustium nervis omnibus sit imitatus.' He proceeds then to explain his view of what Sallust meant when he said 'facta dictis exaequanda sunt'.

'Ego vero sic existimo; qui gestas res dignas digne scripserit, eum animo non minus magno rerumque usu praeditum scribere oportet, quam is qui eas gesserit; ut vel maximas pari animo comprehendere atque metiri possit, et comprehensas sermone puro atque casto graviterque narrare: nam ut ornate non admodum laboro; Historicum enim non Oratorem requiro. . . . Addiderim et illud Sallustianum, qua in re ipse Catonem maxime laudavit, posse multa paucis absolvere; id quod sine acerrimo iudicio, atque etiam temperantia quadam neminem posse arbitror. Sunt multi in quibus vel sermonis elegantiam vel congestarum rerum copiam non desideres; qui brevitatem cum copia coniunxerit, id est, qui multa paucis absolverit, princeps meo iudicio Latinorum est Sallustius. Has ego virtutes Historico inesse putem oportere, qui facta dictis exaequaturum se speret.'[4]

This 'Sallustiana brevitas' as Quintilian terms it, Milton endeavours to imitate, not only in certain highly-wrought passages, but in the pregnant or picturesque phrases interspersed through his narrative.

[1] *History of Britain*, pp. 31–3.

[2] *Ioannis Miltoni Angli Epistolarum Familiarum Liber Unus*, 1674, pp. 53, 58; and *Prose Works*, v. 401, 405. See Masson, *Life of Milton*, v. 363, 379. The letters are dated July 15 and December 16, 1657.

[3] 'Sciat se haud parum in re Historica profecisse, cui placeat Sallustius.'

[4] *Epistolae*, pp. 54–5.

Take, for instance, his summary of the results of the Roman Conquest. 'Of the Romans we have cause not to say much worse, than that they beat us into some civility'.[1] Or his comment on the attempt of Ethelred to buy off the Danes. 'The king and his courtiers . . . send now the fourth time to buy a dishonourable peace, every time still dearer (for the Danes knew how to milk such easy kine).' Or his description of the incursions of the Danes 'sallying forth out of their ships as out of savage dens' to plunder, and then 'like wild beasts glutted returned to their caves'. To vary the phrase in a second case he says 'or rather sea monsters to their water-stables'.[2]

The same quality marks some of Milton's characters of persons. He describes Carausius as usurping the government because he 'was grown at length too great a delinquent to be less than an emperor', and Vortigern as a tyrant who was 'yet of the people much beloved, because his vices sorted so well with theirs'.[3] At times this attempt to put much meaning into few words produces obscurity. At other times it results in something like conceits; as when he describes the Britons 'with a stern compassion' slaying their wives and children to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Romans, or a Dane 'with a pious impiety' killing Archbishop Alfage in order to put an end to his sufferings.[4]

In one passage of his letters to Henry de Brass Milton lays down another principle which should be observed in historical writing. 'Crebras etiam sententias, et iudicia de rebus gestis interiecta prolixe nollem, ne, interrupta rerum serie, quod Politici Scriptoris munus est Historicus invadat; qui si in consiliis explicandis factisque enarrandis, non suum ingenium aut coniecturam, sed veritatem potissimum sequitur, suarum profecto partium satagit.' But he is far from following this counsel himself. It is true he does not insert many general reflections, but there are a few. On the Britons calling the Saxons to help them against the Picts and Scots he observes: 'So much do men through impatience count ever that the heaviest which they bear at present, and to remove the evil which they suffer, care not to pull on a greater; as if variety and change in evil also were acceptable'.[5] When he relates the repentance of Canute and his resolve to make amends to his people, he adds: 'It is a fond conceit in many great ones, and pernicious in the end, to cease from no violence till they have attained the end of

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 49.
[2] Ibid., pp. 252, 255.
[3] Ibid., pp. 86, 109.
[4] Ibid., pp. 76, 256.
[5] Ibid., p. 110.

their ambitions and desires; then to think God appeased by seeking to bribe him with a share, however large, of their illgotten spoils; and then, lastly, to grow zealous of doing right, when they have no longer need to do wrong.'[1]

But generally Milton's comments are not so much to the point: on the contrary, they are as far away from it as possible. He inserts reflections of every kind. Some are references to contemporary manners. When he describes the ancient Britons as 'painting their own skins with several portraitures of beast, bird, or flower', he adds, 'a vanity which hath not yet left us, removed only from the skin to the skirt, behung now with as many coloured ribbands and gewgaws'.[2] Others contain references to contemporary politics. Having to mention the expedition sent by a Northumbrian king to Ireland, he introduces an allusion to the Irish massacres in 1641: 'A harmless nation, saith Beda, and ever friendly to the English; in both which they seem to have left a posterity much unlike them at this day.'[3] Milton's comments continually remind us that he held very strong views about the subjection of women. He is as bitter against 'the monstrous regiment of women' as John Knox himself. Cordelia's nephews rebel against her in spite of her virtues, 'not bearing that a kingdom should be governed by a woman,' and Cartismandua is dethroned by the Britons, not because of her crimes, but on account of 'the uncomeliness of their subjection to the monarchy of a woman'.[4] When he relates, after Holinshed, the legend of Martia, wife of King Guitheline, who is said 'to have excelled so much in wisdom as to venture upon a new institution of laws', the story seems so monstrous that he has to rationalize it away. 'In the minority of her son she had the rule; and then, as may be supposed, brought forth those laws, not herself, for laws are masculine births, but by the advice of her sagest counsellors; and therein she might do virtuously, since it befel her to supply the nonage of her son, else nothing more awry from the law of God and nature than that a woman should give laws to men.'[5]

Perhaps the most curious example of Milton's prejudice against women is that afforded by his treatment of Boadicea. Previous historians had regarded the warrior-queen as a national heroine; he represents her merely as a virago, 'a distracted woman with as mad a crew at her heels.' Dion Cassius puts a long speech into Boadicea's mouth, which Holinshed and Speed reproduce at length. Milton

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 272.
[2] Ibid., p. 48.
[3] Ibid., p. 167; cf. p. 82
[4] Ibid., pp. 22, 60.
[5] Ibid., p. 25.

very properly rejects this oration. 'I affect not set speeches in a history, unless known for certain to have been so spoken in effect as they are written, nor then, unless worth rehearsal; and to invent such, though eloquently, as some historians have done, is an abuse of posterity, raising in them that read other conceptions of those times and persons than were true. Much less, therefore, do I purpose here or elsewhere to copy out tedious orations without decorum, though in their authors composed ready to my hand.'[1] The unseemliness of the oration consists in this, that Dion and also Tacitus put into the mouth of Boadicea, besides 'a deal of other fondness', the statement that 'with the Britons it was usual for a woman to be their leader'. Indignantly Milton observes: 'This they do out of vanity, hoping to embellish and set out their history with the strangeness of our manners, not caring in the meanwhile to brand us with the rankest note of barbarism, as if in Britain women were men and men women.'[2]

Milton's prejudices appear still more strongly and frequently in his references to Church matters. Of set purpose he avoided the ecclesiastical side of British and Saxon history as far as possible, 'not professing to relate of those matters more than what mixes aptly with civil affairs.'[3] The records of political events were often an arid catalogue of names and dates, tragical deaths of princes of whom nothing else was known, and battles without reason or result. 'Such bickerings to recount, met often in these our writers,' complains Milton, 'what more worth is it than to chronicle the wars of kites, or crows flocking and fighting in the air?'[4]

But he deliberately refused to amplify these meagre annals by drawing upon the fund of information which his authorities supplied about the religious life of the times. 'I am sensible how wearisome it may likely be to read of so many and bare and reasonless actions, so many names of kings one after another acting little more than mute persons in a scene. What would it be to have inserted the long bead-roll of archbishops, bishops, abbots, abbesses, and their doings, neither to religion profitable, nor to morality, swelling my authors

[1] *History of Britain*, pp. 65–67. [2] Ibid., p. 66. [3] Ibid., p. 138.

[4] Ibid., p. 184. Hume quotes this: 'The history of that period abounds in names, but is extremely barren of events; or the events related so much without circumstances and causes that the most profound or most eloquent writer must despair of rendering them either instructive or entertaining to the reader. Even the great learning and vigorous imagination of Milton sunk under the weight, and this author scruples not to declare that the skirmishes of the kites or crows as much merited a particular narrative as the confused transactions and battles of the Saxon Heptarchy.'—*History of England*, i. 25.

each to a voluminous body, by me studiously omitted, and left as their propriety, who have a mind to write the ecclesiastical matters of those ages?'[1] The development of a scientific interest in the monuments and institutions of the past was one of the characteristics of seventeenth-century England, but so far as it showed itself in researches into ecclesiastical antiquities Milton took no interest in the movement. He scoffed at men like Dodsworth and Dugdale, 'who take pleasure to be all their lifetime raking the foundations of old abbeys and cathedrals.'[2] Though he professed to distinguish between antiquaries, 'whose labours are useful and laudable,' and 'antiquitarians', that is, 'those that over affect antiquity', and consequently oppose necessary changes in the Church, he evidently thought that all antiquaries tended to become antiquitarians. In his pamphlet *Of Reformation in England* he sneers at Camden as 'a fast friend of episcopacy, who cannot but love bishops as well as old coins and his much lamented monasteries for antiquity's sake'.[3]

Just as Milton failed to appreciate the value of researches into monastic antiquities, so he was insensible to the charm of the monastic legends. He had not hesitated for the sake of the poets to relate Geoffrey of Monmouth's fantastic fictions about the early British kings, but fabulous stories about events which occurred in historic times stood on a different footing. A vision might pass, but no story with a miracle in it should be told in his pages. Legends of martyrs were therefore excluded. Speaking of Alban of Verulam, he says that the story of his martyrdom 'soiled and worse martyred with the fabling zeal of some idle fancies, more fond of miracles than apprehensive of truth, deserves not longer digression'.[4] The secret murder of Kenelm of Mercia was miraculously revealed, 'but to tell how,' says Milton, 'is a long story, though told out of order by Malmesbury, and under the year 821 by Matthew of Westminster, where I leave it to be sought by such as are more credulous than I wish my readers.'[5]

In Milton's attitude scientific incredulity was reinforced by Puritanical abhorrence of popery, and by contempt for the triviality of

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 177. Hume echoes this passage: 'It is almost impossible, and quite needless, to be more particular in relating the transactions of the East Angles. What instruction or entertainment can it give the reader to hear a long bead-roll of barbarous names, Egric, Annas, Ethelbert, Ethelwald, Aldulf, Elfwald, Beorne, Ethelred, Ethelbert, who successively murdered, expelled, or inherited from each other, and obscurely filled the throne of that kingdom?'—i. 40.

[2] Ibid., p. 173.

[3] *Of Reformation in England*, *Prose Works*, i. 14.

[4] *History of Britain*, p. 88.

[5] Ibid.

ecclesiastical controversy, wherein he anticipates the philosophical historians of the next century. After Augustine had commenced the work of converting the men of Kent, Pope Gregory sent him a supply of fellow labourers. 'What they were,' says Milton, 'may be guessed by the stuff which they brought with them, vessels and vestments for the altar, copes, relics, and for the Archbishop Austin a pall to say mass in; to such a rank superstition that age was grown, though some of them yet retaining an emulation of apostolic zeal.'[1] He is still more contemptuous when, having mentioned the Synod of Whitby, he has to refer to the controversy between the Irish and English clergy about the tonsure. 'Another clerical question was there also much controverted, not so superstitious in my opinion as ridiculous, about the right shaving of crowns.'[2] Of monastic institutions he speaks always with similar contempt, dwelling at length on their worst side and on their decay, never mentioning their services in their prime. 'In the days of Ina,' he relates, 'clerks and laics, men and women hasting to Rome in herds, thought themselves nowhere sure of eternal life till they were cloistered there.' Kings imitated their subjects: if one was 'forcibly shaven a monk', many others of their own free will 'got into a monk's hood'. Kelwulf of Northumberland became a monk in Lindisfarne, 'yet none of the severest,' says Milton, 'for he brought those monks from milk and water to wine and ale; in which doctrine no doubt but they were soon docile, and well might, for Kelwulf brought with him good provision, great treasure and revenues of land, recited by Simeon, yet all under pretence of following (I use the author's words) poor Christ, by voluntary poverty: no marvel then if such applause were given by monkish writers to kings turning monks, and much cunning perhaps used to allure them.'[3] The fruit of this predilection for monkish life was the ruin of Church and State. When at the beginning of the ninth century the Danish storm broke in England, the Saxons were ripe for conquest. They were 'broken with luxury and sloth, either secular or superstitious; for laying aside the exercise of arms, and the study of all virtuous knowledge, some betook themselves to overworldly or vicious practice, others to religious idleness and solitude, which brought forth nothing but vain and delusive visions; easily perceived such by their commanding of things, either not belonging to the gospel, or utterly forbidden, ceremonies, relics, monasteries, masses, idols; add to these ostentation of alms, got ofttimes by rapine and oppression, or intermixed with violent and lustful deeds,

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 141.
[2] Ibid., p. 162.
[3] Ibid., pp. 172, 173, 176, 180.

sometimes prodigally bestowed as the expiation of cruelty and bloodshed'. Thus religion itself had grown void of sincerity, and the greatest shows of purity had become impure.[1]

There is one omission in Milton's references to ecclesiastical affairs which at first surprises the reader. He does not attack episcopacy. In 1641 he had thought nothing too bad to say of the bishops. 'Most certain it is (as all our stories bear witness) that ever since their coming to the see of Canterbury, for nearly twelve hundred years, to speak of them in general, they have been in England to our souls a sad and doleful succession of illiterate and blind guides; to our purses and goods a wasteful kind of robbers, a perpetual havoc and rapine; to our state a continual hydra of mischief and molestation, the forge of discord and rebellion.'[2] In the *History*, however, Milton is almost completely silent about the bishops. Incidentally he remarks how quickly Augustine and his successors 'stepped up into fellowship of pomp with kings'. On the other hand, he inserts an unexpectedly favourable character of Dunstan: 'a strenuous bishop, zealous without dread of persons, and for aught appears, the best of many ages, if he busied not himself too much in secular affairs.'[3]

Perhaps this absence of attacks on bishops is to be explained by the fact that they were suppressed by the licenser. Toland says: 'The Licensers, those sworn officers to destroy learning, liberty, and good sense, expunged several passages of it, wherein he exposed the superstitious pride and cunning of the popish monks in the Saxon times, but applied by the sagacious Licensers to Charles the Second's bishops.'[4] But the number of attacks upon 'the popish monks' which remain seem to refute the story that such indirect thrusts at Milton's old enemies were struck out. Some remarks against the bishops perhaps disappeared owing to the censorship, but there is a better explanation of their absence. Bishops had been abolished before Milton began to write his *History*. Since 1646 'new presbyter' not 'old priest' had been Milton's mark.[5] In the *History* he used the primitive bishops as a stalking-horse against the Presbyterians. Relating the story that three British bishops who attended the Synod of Rimini in 354 accepted the emperor's offer to pay their expenses rather than the subsidies offered by the brethren, 'esteeming it more honourable to live on the public than

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 190.
[2] *Of Reformation*, *Prose Works*, i. 60.
[3] *History of Britain*, pp. 141, 245.
[4] Toland, *Life of John Milton*, 1699, p. 138.
[5] Sonnet 'On the New Forces of Conscience under the Long Parliament'.

to be obnoxious to any private purse,' he adds the comment: 'doubtless an ingenuous mind, and far above the presbyters of our age; who like well to sit in assembly on the public stipend, but liked not the poverty that caused these to do so.'[1] Under cover of describing after Gildas the vices of the British clergy in the sixth century, he inserts phrases aimed at modern ministers. 'Pastors in name but in deed wolves,' 'seizing on the ministry as a trade, not as a spiritual charge,' 'intent not to feed the flock but to pamper and well line themselves,' who 'keep in awe the superstitious multitude' with 'niceties and trivial points' but 'in true saving knowledge leave them still as gross and stupid as themselves'.[2] Lest there should be any mistake made by his readers, Milton placed at the beginning of Book III a comparison between the state of Britain when the Romans left it and that of England in 1647 and 1648, containing a direct denunciation of the self-seeking of the divines of the Westminster Assembly and their demand for compulsion in matters of conscience.[3]

This great digression shows how impossible it was for Milton to avoid referring to the problems of the present when he was writing about the events of the past. To utter freely what he felt about 'so dear a concernment' as his country's weal was a necessity of his nature. Just as Carlyle was obliged to suspend his study of Cromwell in order to express in *Past and Present* his feelings about the condition of England in 1843, so Milton interrupted his *History of Britain* in order to say what he thought about the condition of England in 1648. As the Civil War drew towards its close, the result of 'all this waste of wealth and loss of blood' became doubtful. In the two years of confusion which followed, no stable settlement was attained, and it seemed as if none was attainable. The king had been practically set aside, but the Parliament seemed unable to govern. To Milton, England appeared to be in the position of Britain when the Roman rule ended. When the Romans left the country, the Britons 'thus relinquished, and by all right the government relapsing into their own hands, thenceforth betook themselves to live after their own laws.' But they failed to erect a stable government. 'They seemed awhile to bestir themselves with a show of diligence in their new affairs, some secretly aspiring to rule, others adoring the name of liberty, yet so soon as they felt by proof the weight of what it was to govern well themselves, and

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 90. He refers to this again in *The Likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church*, *Prose Works*, iii. 376.

[2] *History of Britain*, p. 129.

[3] Ibid., p. 100; *Prose Works*, ed. Mitford, iii. 94–101.

what was wanting in them, not stomach or the love of licence, but the wisdom, the virtue, the labour to use and maintain true liberty, they soon remitted their heat, and shrunk more wretchedly under the burden of their own liberty than before under a foreign yoke.'[1] England now was in a similar condition. Fortune seemed 'to have put liberty so long desired like a bride into their hands'. The faults of the Britons 'brought those ancient natives to misery and ruin by liberty, which rightly used might have made them happy', as the faults of the English had brought them now, 'after many labours, much bloodshed and vast expense, to ridiculous frustration.'[2]

What were the causes of this failure? When the Long Parliament met the people chose to represent them 'such as they thought best affected to the public good'. Some were men of wisdom and integrity, but the greater part merely of men of wealth or ambition. These last, 'when their superficial zeal was spent,' betook themselves every one to follow his own ends. Justice was delayed and denied; spite and favour determined all; everywhere there was wrong and oppression. The members shared offices, gifts, and preferments amongst themselves; instead of enacting good laws they did nothing but impose new taxes; instead of paying the just debts of the State they cheated its creditors.[3] Fearful of being called to account, they fomented fresh troubles and invented new business in order to avoid the necessity of laying down their authority.

Religion was in as bad a plight as the State. The Westminster Assembly had been selected to reform the Church. Its members, after crying down pluralists and non-residents, had become pluralists and non-residents themselves. They called as loudly for compulsion in matters of religion against others as they had complained of it when exercised against themselves, and strove to set up a spiritual tyranny by the aid of the secular power. Seeing the incapacity of their statesmen, the people became disaffected, and seeing the hypocrisy of their ministers, they ceased to believe in religion.

'Thus,' continues Milton, 'they who of late were extolled as our greatest deliverers, and had the people wholly at their devotion, by so discharging their trust as we see, did not only weaken and unfit

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 100. Milton elsewhere refers to this period to prove that British kings were elected by the people, and could be deposed by them. See p. 107, and *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *Prose Works*, ii. 472.

[2] The ridiculousness of failure to maintain freedom after such efforts to gain it is in 1660 the keynote of Milton's *Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*, when the position resembled that in 1648. *Prose Works*, iii. 425.

[3] Compare Milton's Sonnet to Fairfax, written in August 1648.

themselves to be dispensers of what liberty they pretended, but unfitted also the people, now grown worse and more disordinate, to receive or digest any liberty at all. For stories teach us, that liberty sought out of season, in a corrupt and degenerate age, brought Rome itself into a farther slavery: for liberty hath a sharp and double edge, fit only to be handled by just and virtuous men; to bad and dissolute, it becomes a mischief unwieldy in their own hands: neither is it completely given, but by them who have the happy skill to know what is grievance and unjust to a people, and how to remove it wisely; what good laws are wanting, and how to frame them substantially, that good men may enjoy the freedom which they merit, and the bad the curb which they need. But to do this, and to know these exquisite proportions, the heroic wisdom which is required surmounted far the principles of these narrow politicians: what wonder then if they sunk as these unfortunate Britons before them, entangled and oppressed with things too hard and generous above their strain and temper?'[1]

Then, having stated the causes of this failure, Milton explained the cure. Englishmen, 'to speak a truth not often spoken,' were not born statesmen. England was a land 'fruitful enough of men stout and courageous in war', but at the same time 'not over-fertile naturally of men able to govern wisely and prudently in peace'. The national character was in fault: it was rude, intractable and unteachable—he almost says unintelligent. Public spirit and similar qualities 'grow not here but in minds well implanted with solid and elaborate breeding'. Just as certain products must be imported to our island from sunnier lands, 'so must ripe understanding and many civil virtues be imported into our minds from foreign writings and examples of best ages.' If England was to succeed in great enterprises she must have men with the education of statesmen to conduct her affairs—not politicians 'trusting only in their mother wit' or tradesmen 'called from shops and warehouses to sit in supreme councils', but 'men more than vulgar, bred up in the knowledge of ancient and illustrious deeds'.

Here Milton's tract *Of Education* and his *History of Britain* explain each other. When he wrote in 1644 that the reforming of education was a thing 'for the want whereof this nation perishes', he did not mean that England was perishing for want of scholars, but for want of statesmen. His imaginary pupils were from the first to be 'stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God and famous to all ages', and in the end

[1] *Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament*, p. 9.

to be fit 'to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war'. Thus to qualify them, one of their studies must be the study of politics. They should be taught to know 'the beginning, end, and reasons of political societies; that they may not, in a dangerous fit of the commonwealth, be such poor, shaken, uncertain reeds, of such a tottering conscience, as many of our great counsellors have lately shown themselves, but steadfast pillars of the State'.[1]

'Choice histories' were also to be put into their hands, and in the *History of Britain* Milton explains what he conceived to be the practical value of his national history to a statesman. It could teach him to understand the character of his countrymen in its strength and weakness. By comparing the past and present, we can 'raise a knowledge of ourselves both great and weighty', and judge what we are able to achieve. 'For if it be a high point of wisdom in every private man, much more is it in a nation, to know itself, rather than puffed up with vulgar flatteries and encomiums, for want of self-knowledge, to enterprise rashly and come off miserably in great undertakings.'[2]

With the exception of the first paragraph, the whole of this long digression was omitted when Milton published his *History* in 1670. The passage was published in 1681, after his death, under the title of *Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament and the Assembly of Divines.* According to the publisher, Mr. Milton had intended the 'Character' to be printed in his *History*, 'but out of tenderness to a party (whom neither this nor much more lenity has had the luck to oblige) it was struck out for some harshness, being only such a digression as the *History* itself would not be discomposed by its omission.'[3]

Yet, while the suppressed passage is undoubtedly Milton's, and is correctly placed at the beginning of the third book, the explanation given of its omission is obviously absurd. The publisher recommended it as 'very seasonable for these times', and it would have been equally seasonable in 1670. It was printed now as a controversial weapon against the Presbyterians and the Nonconformists, and it could have been printed eleven years earlier for the same reason. For there was no thought in 1670 of any tenderness towards that party, as the

[1] *Prose Works*, ii. 384, 385, 388.

[2] *History of Britain*, p. 100. Of the digression there remains in the text thirteen lines on p. 99 and eleven and a half on the next page. The rest was omitted.

[3] Masson, *Life of Milton*, pp. 806–7.

passing of the second Conventicle Act in that year proved. Any licenser would have welcomed the denunciation of the Assembly of Divines as a powerful argument in favour of the policy of the king's government.

The most reasonable explanation is that Milton suppressed the passage himself. All had changed since 1648. The Assembly of Divines was a thing of the past, and its survivors were now persecuted rather than persecutors. The Long Parliament had come to an end: obscurity, or captivity, or the scaffold had been the fate of its leaders, and Milton was more inclined to lament their sufferings than to point out their trespasses or omissions in the day of their power. Englishmen themselves, instead of attempting the high enterprise of erecting a free state, had contentedly relapsed into their old servitude. Milton, therefore, whilst retaining the suggested parallel between the condition of the Britons in the fifth century and that of the English at the close of the first civil war, eliminated the application to the politics of 1648. It had lost all practical utility.

Yet since all history should 'instruct and benefit them that read', the moral of the whole story should be made plain.[1] Poet or historian, Milton was ever a preacher, and used British history for the purpose of edification just as he would have used his British epic. To his eyes the significance of the revolutions he had related was clear. Each successive conquest of Britain was a just judgement on the conquered race. The Britons were mere barbarians, 'progenitors not to be gloried in,' naturally and deservedly subdued by the Romans. Roman civilization served but to prepare them for bondage. Freedom made them worse instead of better, till 'scarce the least footstep or impression of goodness was left remaining through all ranks and degrees in the land; except in some so very few as hardly to be visible in a general corruption.'[2] Hence 'the many miseries and desolations brought by a divine hand on a perverse nation; driven, when nothing else could reform them, out of a fair country into a mountainous and barren corner by strangers and pagans. So much more tolerable in the eye of heaven is infidelity professed than Christian faith and religion dishonoured by unchristian works.'[3] By the ninth century 'the Saxons were full as wicked as the Britons were at their arrival'. They fell before the Danes because God purposed 'to punish our instrumental punishers, though now Christians, by other heathen, according to His divine retaliation, invasion for invasion, spoil for spoil, destruction for destruction'.

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 3.
[2] Ibid., pp. 49, 71, 108, 128.
[3] Ibid., p. 134.

Vain had been the union of the seven kingdoms under one rule, for 'when God hath decreed servitude on a sinful nation, fitted by their own vices for no condition but servile, all estates of government are alike unable to avoid it'.[1]

Such, too, were the causes of the Norman Conquest. By their vices the English had 'fitted themselves for this servitude'. The clergy had 'lost all good literature and religion'; the great men were 'given to gluttony and dissolute life'; the meaner sort 'spent all they had in drunkenness. . . . Some few of all sorts were much better among them; but such was the generality.' And as the long-suffering of God 'permits bad men to enjoy prosperous days with the good, so His severity ofttimes exempts not good men from their share in evil times with the bad'.

It remained only to apply this moral to the present moment, and to warn the England of Charles II. Milton does this in the last sentence of his *History*, added evidently in 1670: 'If these were the causes of such misery and thraldom to our ancestors, with what better close can be concluded, than here in fit season to remember this age in the midst of her security, to fear from like vices, without amendment, the revolution of like calamities.'[2]

[1] *History of Britain*, p. 190.

[2] The inseparable connexion between liberty and virtue was the fundamental doctrine of Milton's political pamphlets as well as his *History*, and he emphasized it both in *Paradise Lost* and in *Paradise Regained*. Men, explains the Archangel Michael to Adam, lost their inward freedom when they allowed their passions to 'catch the government from reason', and the loss of their outward freedom followed. It was so with nations too.

> 'Sometimes nations will decline so low
> From virtue, which is freedom, that no wrong
> But Justice, and some fatal curse annext
> Deprives them of their outward liberty,
> Their inward lost.'

Nor was it possible to deliver them. 'Who can of inward slaves make outward free?' replies Christ to the Tempter.

MILTON'S FAME ON THE CONTINENT

By J. G. ROBERTSON

Read December 10, 1908

MILTON'S FAME ON THE CONTINENT

By J. G. ROBERTSON

Read December 10, 1908

Milton was the first English poet to inspire respect and win fame for our literature on the Continent of Europe, the first poet to be known and to be adjudged worthy of knowing by continental critics: and he was the only English writer whom the biographical lexicons of the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century considered it necessary to discuss at length. To *Paradise Lost* was due, to an extent that has not yet been fully realized, the change which came over European ideas in the eighteenth century with regard to the nature and scope of epic poetry; that work was the mainstay of those adventurous critics who dared to vindicate in the face of French classicism the rights of the imagination over the reason as the creative and motive force in poetry. Milton's influence on the German literature of the eighteenth century was hardly inferior to Shakespeare's, and he cast an equally strong spell over the minds of the pioneers of French Romanticism at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These facts, if nothing else, are reason enough for considering, on the present occasion of the Tercentenary of the poet's birth, the part he has played in moulding the thought and imagination of the peoples of the Continent.

Just as Shakespeare found his way to the Continent through the medium of strolling players who performed garbled versions of his plays in the chief towns of northern Europe, so the knowledge of Milton was spread abroad by means that had even less connexion with literature. It was not as a poet at all that he first became known, but as the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the notorious defender of regicides. In 1652, John Dury published, by order of the English government, a translation of the Εἰκονοκλάστης into French,[1] which materially helped to spread Milton's fame, or rather

[1] Εἰκονοκλάστης, *ou Réponse au Livre intitulé* Εἰκὼν Βασιλική, *traduite de l'Anglois.* Londres, 1652. See D. Masson, *Life of Milton*, iv (1877), p. 448. In October, 1654, Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, and sister of Charles I, wrote from the Hague to her son, the Elector Karl Ludwig of the Palatinate, recommending him

notoriety, abroad. Milton was mentioned, but not as a poet, by P. Costar in his *Mémoire des gens de lettres célèbres des pays étrangers*,[1] and the Comte de Comminges, Louis XIV's ambassador at the court of Charles II, made, in 1663, his famous report to his royal master to the effect that the arts and sciences had passed to France, and that, if there were any vestiges left in England, 'ce n'est que dans la mémoire de Bacon, de Morus, de Bucanan et, dans les derniers siècles, d'un nommé Miltonius qui s'est rendu plus infâme par ses dangereux écrits que les bourreaux et les assassins de leur roi'.[2] The lexicographers, C. Funccius, G. M. König, C. Gryphius, and V. Paravicini, give Milton brief notices in their biographical works,[3] but they know him only as a political agitator, and especially as the author of *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, a book to which universal attention had been drawn on the Continent by the fact of its having been publicly burned at Paris and Toulouse. In 1697, Bayle honoured Milton by devoting to him three pages of his *Dictionary*, this being the only English poet mentioned in the work.[4] Still, it is obvious that it was not Milton the poet, but Milton the political writer, in whom Bayle was interested, and he was content to repeat at second hand that *Paradise Lost* 'passe pour l'un des plus beaux ouvrages de poésie que l'on ait vu en anglais', *Paradise Regained* being 'not nearly so good'. In 1704, when the German scholar J. F. Buddaeus came to compile his *Allgemeines historisches Lexicon*, the first German encyclopaedia

to have nothing to do with Dury, who was to pass through Heidelberg, because 'he uritt and printed a booke, where he aproues the king my dear Brothers murther, which I haue read, and he has translated into french Milletons booke against the Kings booke, so as I intreat you, not to see that rascall . . .' (*Briefe der Elisabeth Stuart, Königin von Böhmen, an ihren Sohn den Kurfürsten Carl Ludwig von der Pfalz.* Herausgegeben von A. Wendland, Stuttgarter Lit. Verein, vol. ccxxviii, 1902, p. 51). Daniel Heinsius mentioned, in 1651, a translation of the *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, but this does not appear to have been published. Chapelain discusses Milton in his correspondence (*Lettres*, Paris, 1880–3, ii, pp. 103, 110), and also Guy Patin. See J. M. Telleen, *Milton dans la littérature française*, Paris, 1904, pp. 2 ff., a study to which I must here express my indebtedness.

[1] See P. N. Desmolets, *Mémoires de littérature et d'histoire*, Paris, 1726, ii, p. 355 (quoted by J. J. Jusserand, *Shakespeare en France*, Paris, 1898, p. 107). Costar died in 1660.

[2] See J. J. Jusserand, *A French Ambassador at the Court of Charles II*, London, 1892, pp. 58, 205.

[3] G. M. König, *Bibliotheca vetus et nova*, Altdorf, 1678, p. 541; C. Gryphius, *Apparatus sive dissertatio isagogica de scriptoribus historiam seculi XVII illustrantibus*, Leipzig, 1710, pp. 320, 333 ff.; V. Paravicini, *Singularia de viris eruditione claris*, Basel, 1713, p. 207.

[4] *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Rotterdam, 1697, vol. ii, p. 590.

on a large scale, he devoted a comparatively long article to Milton,[1] but had not much more to say about Milton's poetry than what he found in Bayle. Still later, J. B. Mencke, who made extensive use of his predecessor's work, had, in his *Compendiöses Gelehrten-Lexicon* (1713), nothing to say of Milton as a poet at all, although he appears to have himself possessed a copy of the edition of *Paradise Lost* of 1704;[2] that is to say, the most generally used German biographical dictionary in the second decade of the eighteenth century did not consider it worth while even to mention Milton's poetry!

As a matter of fact, however, the ignorance of Milton's poetry at the end of the seventeenth century was by no means as great as this would imply, even in Germany. For as early as 1682—more than forty years before an attempt was made to translate Milton into any other modern European tongue—there appeared at Zerbst a translation of *Paradise Lost* into German: *Das verlustigte Paradeis, auss Johann Miltons zeit seiner Blindheit in Englischer Sprache abgefassten unvergleichlichen Gedicht*,[3] by Ernst Gottlieb von Berge, privy secretary and interpreter to the Great Elector. And even this was not the first translation of the epic, one having been begun still earlier by a German in England, Theodor Haake, a writer who forms an interesting link between Germany and England in the seventeenth century. Haake was a Rhinelander by birth, and in 1625, at the age of twenty, came over to study at Oxford and Cambridge. He virtually spent the rest of his life in England, where under the Protectorate he played an important political rôle as mediator between Cromwell and the Continent. He was also one of the first founders of the Royal Society. Haake stood on friendly terms with Milton, and his translation of *Paradise Lost*—it does not go beyond the beginning of the fourth canto—was made about the end of the seventies. It is much superior to Berge's version, which it seems to have inspired, Haake having circulated his manuscript among his continental friends. His translation, however, was neither finished

[1] *Allgemeines historisches Lexicon*, iii (I quote from the edition of 1730), p. 569 (2½ columns). J. Klefeker devoted no less than eleven pages of his *Bibliotheca eruditorum praecocium*, Hamburg, 1717 (pp. 233 ff.), to Milton.

[2] See *Bibliotheca Menckeniana*, Leipzig, 1723, p. 561.

[3] There is a copy in the British Museum. See G. Jenny, *Miltons Verlornes Paradies in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, St. Gallen, 1890, pp. 5 ff. A reprint of Berge's translation, together with Haake's MS., was promised years ago by Professor A. Sauer in his series, *Bibliothek älterer deutscher Übersetzungen*, but the series seems to have been discontinued. On Berge, cp. J. Bolte, *Die beiden ältesten Verdeutschungen von Miltons Verlorenem Paradies*, in the *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*, i (1888), pp. 426 ff.

nor published, and a manuscript of it is preserved in the Landesbibliothek at Cassel.[1] Berge's work, it need only be added, is clumsy and uninspired, and attracted little or no attention at the time of its publication, although the reason is perhaps to be sought not so much in its mediocre quality as in the fact that Berge, following his friend's example, made the bold attempt to translate Milton in the rimeless metre of the original. When, many years later, Gottsched and Bodmer unearthed this first German *Paradise Lost*, they had little that was favourable to say about it.[2] In the same year in which it appeared, Daniel Morhof, the first continental writer to mention Shakespeare's name, discussed Milton's rimeless verse in his *Unterricht von der teutschen Sprache und Poesie*.[3]

But in spite of this promising beginning, there was no permanency in Germany's interest in Milton; Berge's translation was soon com-

[1] 'Das Verlustigte Paradeiss auss und nach dem Englischen I. M. durch F.H. zu übersetzen angefangen—voluisse sat.' On Haake, see H. L. Benthem, *Engelländischer Kirch- und Schulenstaat*, Lüneburg, 1694, pp. 57 ff.; also A. Stern, *Milton und seine Zeit*, iii, Leipzig, 1879, p. 26. In estimating the value of translations in spreading a knowledge of Milton, it must not be forgotten that *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* were translated into Latin in 1690 by a Scotchman, William Hog (*Paraphrasis poetica in tria Johannis Miltoni poemata*, London, 1690). This work seems to have been pretty generally known on the Continent, and it is quoted by Bayle.

[2] See Jenny, *l.c.*, pp. 6 ff., where quotations are given from Bodmer's correspondence with J. U. von König (*Literarische Pamphlete aus der Schweiz, nebst Briefen an Bodmer*, Zurich, 1781, p. 40, and A. Brandl, *Zur ersten Verdeutschung von Miltons Verlorenem Paradies*, in *Anglia*, i 1878, pp. 460 ff.). See also Hans Bodmer, *Die Anfänge des zürcherischen Milton*, in *Studien zur Literaturgeschichte M. Bernays gewidmet*, Hamburg, 1893, pp. 177 ff. 'Diese Übersetzung,' said Bodmer in the preface to the first edition of his translation of *Paradise Lost*, 'ist in keinen Ruf kommen. Wahr ist, dass Milton sehr verfinstert darinne aussiehet; doch behält auch der gefallene Poet so viel von seinem angebohrnen Glantze, dass er bey nachsinnenden Lesern ein Aufsehen machen, und zum wenigsten eine Begierde nach dem Original hat erwecken sollen' (p. 9). Cf. J. U. von König's opinion in a letter to Bodmer of May 15, 1725 (A. Brandl, *B. H. Brockes*, Innsbruck, 1878, p. 142). Gottsched's criticism is to be found in his *Beiträge zur critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache, Poesie und Beredsamkeit*, i (1732), pp. 85 ff.

[3] 'Der bekante Johannes Milton hat ein vollständig Poëma: genannt *The Paradis lost*, ohne Reimen geschrieben, woselbst er in der Vorrede dieser Schreibart das Wort redet . . . . In Teutscher Sprach hat noch niemand es [i. e., to write blank verse] zu versuchen begehret, ist auch eine unnötige Arbeit. Meines erachtens, wann einer die ungereimten Verse höher als die andern halten wolte, were es eben, als wann einer einer Strohfidel vor einer wollgestimten Geige den Vorzug gebe.' (*Unterricht von der teutschen Sprache und Poesie*, Kiel, 1682, pp. 568 f.) Morhof also mentions Milton in his *Polyhistor*, Lübeck, 1688, pp. 304 f. Cp. Jenny, *l.c.* pp. 8 ff.

pletely forgotten, if, indeed, it had ever begun to be known. H. L. Benthem, in his *Engelländischer Kirch- und Schulenstaat* (1694), a kind of guide-book to England intended especially for theologians, has something to say of Milton;[1] but otherwise I have been able to trace no German mention of Milton—with the exception of a review in the Leipzig *Acta Eruditorum* of 1696—before 1700, when the same periodical drew general attention to him by a detailed account of Toland's *Life of Milton*.[2] Hamburg was one of the principal channels through which English literature found its way to Germany, and in the early years of the eighteenth century the Hamburg poets, Wernigke, Triller, Brockes (who translated parts of *Paradise Lost*), and Hagedorn, all took a warm interest in Milton.[3]

Meanwhile, France, although no attempt had yet been made there to translate Milton, was growing increasingly curious about him.[4] A brief mention of his name in the *Journal des Savans* in 1708 was followed, two years later, by a distorted account, written in a spirit of religious intolerance, in the *Mémoires de Trévoux*; the 'impiety' and 'perfidy' of Milton's writings are condemned in no measured terms; *Paradise Lost* is disposed of as 'très séditieux', though much applauded in England, and his works in general are described as 'plutôt l'effet d'une imagination déréglée, que d'un jugement solide.'[5]

Thus it is not perhaps surprising that when the first translator of *The Spectator* into French arrived in his third volume (1718) at what he called Addison's 'critique fine et judicieuse du célèbre poëme de Milton intitulé *Le Paradis perdu*' he excused himself from translating the papers in question on the ground that the poem 'n'a pas été et qu'il ne sera sans doute jamais traduit en notre langue'.[6] A year

[1] There were two editions of this work, 1694 and 1732. For Milton, see pp. 57 ff. of the first edition, and pp. 115 ff. and 1121 ff. of the second. His poetic work receives, however, only a bare mention.

[2] *Acta Eruditorum*, 1696, pp. 226 f., 1700, pp. 371 ff. There are also frequent passing references to Milton in subsequent volumes. Toland's book was reviewed in H. Basnage de Beauval's *Histoire des ouvrages des savans*, February, 1699 (p. 87). Cp. Telleen, *l.c.*, p. 13.

[3] See Brandl, *l.c.*, pp. 35, 100 ff.

[4] Professor Spingarn has recently drawn attention to a passage in a letter from Vincent Minutoli to Bayle, of December 15, 1690, in which he refers to the high opinion the English had of Milton: 'Ils m'en ont parlé comme du *non plus ultra* de l'esprit humain' (*Modern Language Notes*, xxii (1907), p. 232). The citation is from E. Gigas, *Choix de la correspondance inédite de P. Bayle*, Copenhagen, 1890, p. 579.

[5] *Journal des Savans*, 1708, pp. 331 ff: *Mémoires de Trévoux*, 1710, pp. 2123 ff. Milton's name was put on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* in 1700, the Italian translation of *Paradise Lost* in 1732. (Telleen, *l.c.*, p. 7.)

[6] *Le Spectateur, ou le Socrate moderne*, Amsterdam, 1714 ff., iii, preface. It is

earlier, however, Milton and his verse had been treated at considerable length, and with due seriousness, in the famous *Dissertation sur la poésie anglaise* in the *Journal littéraire*,[1] an article which, although not showing much originality, was a landmark of importance in the diffusion of English literature abroad. It contained the most enlightening and suggestive criticism of both Shakespeare and Milton that had up to that date appeared in French. The next ten years seem to have marked but little advance in Milton's progress in France; a few passing references to him in periodical publications exhausts it.[2] The years 1727–8 marked, however, the turning-point of Milton's fame on the Continent; for in 1727 appeared, first in English, and some months later in a French translation by the Abbé Desfontaines, Voltaire's *Essay upon Epick Poetry*. Even in his earliest years Voltaire had the art of commanding attention when he spoke; and this essay set all Europe thinking and talking about Milton, just as the *Lettres anglaises*, a few years later, laid the foundation of Shakespeare's fame on the Continent.

The *Essay upon Epick Poetry* was a much bolder and more effective plea for Milton's poetic greatness than anything Voltaire ever wrote about Shakespeare. Indeed, it may be said that nothing had yet been written—and nothing was to be written for many years to come—by a foreigner, which was so likely to awaken admiration for Milton as the final chapter of Voltaire's English essay. Unfortunately, however, when Voltaire published his own French version of the *Essay* in 1732, as a pendant to the *Henriade*, his attitude to Milton had undergone a change, and he either suppressed altogether the laudatory things he had said in English, or at least toned them down. He

of importance to note that the early editions of *The Spectator* in French—which were so widely read all over the Continent—omitted the papers on Milton; these, however, were soon translated and published, separately, or together with the early French translations of *Paradise Lost*. (See below, pp. 326 f.)

[1] *Journal littéraire*, ix (1717), pp. 178 ff. There is also a mention of Milton in the volume for 1716. It is perhaps worth recording that Rapin, in his review of epic poetry (*Réflexions sur la Poétique*, 1709), ignores Milton completely; on the other hand, the Chevalier A. M. Ramsay does refer to him, without mentioning his name, in his *Discours sur la poésie épique et de l'excellence du Poëme de Télémaque*, Paris, 1717, p. xxviii. (Telleen, *l.c.*, p. 8.)

[2] For instance, in the *Bibliothèque anglaise*, vol. i (1717), pp. 43, 377; vol. iv (1718), pp. 539 ff. (Review of Milton's tract *Of Education*). In Armand de la Chapelle's translation of *The Tatler* (*Le Babillard*, Amsterdam, 1724) occurs the earliest French translation of lines from *Paradise Lost*, namely viii, 268–91. It is quoted in full by Telleen, pp. 13 f. In a note to vol. i, p. 427, the translator of *The Tatler* complains that Milton has filled his poem with 'tant de Métaphysique, de Spiritualités, de Combats d'Intelligences etc. qu'à mon avis quelquefois il en est inintelligible.'

did not, in the original *Essay*, conceal the fact that much in Milton's epic was at variance with the sweetness and reason of the French classic canon, and he pointed out Milton's lapses from good taste; but the tone of his criticism of *Paradise Lost*, 'the noblest Work which human Imagination hath ever attempted,' was dignified, and he regarded the poet with an admiration which could not have been assumed merely to flatter his English readers.[1]

What *Milton* [he said] so boldly undertook, he perform'd with a superior Strength of Judgment, and with an Imagination productive of Beauties not dream'd of before him. The Meanness (if there is any) of some Parts of the Subject is lost in the Immensity of the Poetical Invention. There is something above the reach of human Forces to have attempted the Creation without Bombast, to have describ'd the Gluttony and Curiosity of a Woman without Flatness, to have brought Probability and Reason amidst the Hurry of imaginary Things belonging to another World, and as far remote from the Limits of our Notions as they are from our Earth; in short to force the Reader to say, 'If God, if the Angels, if Satan would speak, I believe they would speak as they do in *Milton*.'

I have often admir'd how barren the Subject appears, and how fruitful it grows under his Hands.

The *Paradise Lost* is the only Poem wherein are to be found in a perfect Degree that Uniformity which satisfies the Mind, and that Variety which pleases the Imagination. All its Episodes being necessary Lines which aim at the Centre of a perfect Circle. Where is the Nation who would not be pleas'd with the Interview of *Adam* and the *Angel*? With the Mountain of Vision, with the bold Strokes which make up the Relentless, undaunted and sly Character of Satan? But above all with that sublime Wisdom which *Milton* exerts, whenever he dares to describe God, and to make him speak? He seems indeed to draw the Picture of the Almighty, as like as human Nature can reach to, through the mortal Dust in which we are clouded.

The *Heathens* always, the *Jews* often, and our Christian Priests sometimes, represent God as a Tyrant infinitely powerful. But the God of *Milton* is always a Creator, a Father, and a Judge, nor is his Vengeance jarring with his Mercy, nor his Predeterminations repugnant to the Liberty of Man. These are the Pictures which lift up indeed the Soul of the Reader. *Milton* in that Point as well as in many others is as far above the ancient Poets as the Christian Religion is above the *Heathen* Fables.

But he hath especially an undisputable Claim to the unanimous Admiration of Mankind, when he descends from those high Flights to the natural Description of human Things. It is observable that in all other Poems Love is represented as a Vice, in *Milton* only 'tis a Virtue. The Pictures he draws of it, are naked as the Persons he speaks of, and as venerable. He removes with a chaste Hand the Veil which covers every where else the enjoyments of that Passion. There is Softness, Tenderness and Warmth without Lasciviousness; the Poet transports himself and

[1] A copy of the English original is in the British Museum: *An Essay upon the Civil Wars of France, Extracted from curious Manuscripts, and also upon the Epick Poetry of the European Nations from Homer down to Milton.* By Mr. de Voltaire. London, 1727. My quotations are from this copy, pp. 105 ff. The French translation of 1728 I have not seen, but to judge from the specimens in the review in the *Journal des Savans*, 1728, pp. 517 ff., it was quite literal.

us into that State of innocent Happiness in which *Adam* and *Eve* continued for a short Time : He soars not above human, but above corrupt Nature, and as there is no Instance of such Love, there is none of such Poetry.[1]

As was the case with Shakespeare, however, Voltaire had no sooner awakened an interest in Milton, than he arrived at the conclusion that an excess of admiration for this foreign poet might endanger the good taste of Europe ; the piquancy of having discovered Milton gave place—as soon as others began to occupy themselves with his poetry—to repentance for the momentary back-sliding which had led him to forget his responsibilities as the guardian of literary taste and propriety. Moreover, nemesis seemed to follow his praise of Milton with sinister rapidity : only a few months after his *Essay*, there was published the first translation of *Paradise Lost* into French, that, namely, of N. F. Dupré de Saint-Maur.[2] Voltaire veered round at once ; he expunged, as we have seen, as much of the praise as he reasonably could from his *Essay on Epic Poetry* before publishing it in French, and, from now on, his attacks on Milton were even more unscrupulous than his antagonism in later life to Shakespeare. He ridiculed the English poet in his *Candide*, and even parodied him in his *Pucelle*.[3]

Dupré de Saint-Maur had prefaced his version of *Paradise Lost*—it is in prose—by a translation of Elijah Fenton's *Life of Milton*, and, in collaboration with a certain Barret, he translated those papers on Milton from *The Spectator* which the first translator of that journal had not considered it worth while to present to French readers.

[1] The French text is only a weak echo of the last paragraphs : ' On fut étonné de trouver, dans un sujet qui paraît si stérile, une si grande fertilité d'imagination ; on admira les traits majestueux avec lesquels il ose peindre Dieu, et le caractère encore plus brillant qu'il donne au diable ; on lut avec beaucoup de plaisir la description du jardin d'Éden, et des amours innocentes d'Adam et d'Ève. En effet, il est à remarquer que dans tous les autres poëmes l'amour est regardé comme une faiblesse ; dans Milton seul il est une vertu. Le poëte a su lever d'une main chaste le voile qui couvre ailleurs les plaisirs de cette passion ; il transporte le lecteur dans le jardin de délices ; il semble lui faire goûter les voluptés pures dont Adam et Ève sont remplis : il ne s'élève pas au-dessus de la nature humaine, mais au-dessus de la nature humaine corrompue ; et comme il n'y a point d'exemple d'un pareil amour, il n'y en a point d'une pareille poésie.' (*Œuvres complètes*, éd. Garnier, viii, p. 357.)

[2] Paris, 1727. Telleen (p. 142) enumerates over thirty editions, the latest in 1899.

[3] In the *Table générale et analytique*, at the end of Voltaire's *Œuvres complètes* (éd. Garnier, lii, p. 159), will be found a list of the passages in which Voltaire refers to Milton. The most important are : *Essai sur la poésie épique* (viii, pp. 306 ff., 352 ff.) ; *Siècle de Louis XIV* (xiv, pp. 76, 133, 559 f.) ; *Candide* (xxi, p. 204) ; *Dictionnaire philosophique* (xviii, pp. 580 ff., xx, pp. 35, 396).

Addison's essays on Milton in French (*Remarques sur le Paradis Perdu*) passed through some ten editions in the eighteenth century,[1] and were usually printed with translations of *Paradise Lost*; and round these, we may say, as round a pivot, continental criticism of Milton virtually turned. Stirred to opposition by Addison's eulogy, Constantin de Magny devoted in 1729 a book to the criticism of the poem, a large proportion of it being, however, devoted to a censure of Milton's erring theology; while Bernard Routh, an Irish Jesuit, in his *Lettres critiques*, mingled warm praise with a great deal of irrelevant blame based on preconceived ideas of what epic poetry should be and do.[2] The intention of both these writers was to modify by their criticism the warm reception of Milton in France; but neither, in spite of a strong distaste for Milton's theology, could withhold words of praise in estimating Milton's genius. Consequently the interest in Milton was only stimulated, and Routh's letters were frequently printed with translations of *Paradise Lost*. Dupré de Saint-Maur's version—and, as the outcome of a lengthy and somewhat acrimonious controversy with regard to the authorship,[3] it seems fairly well established that he deserves the main credit for it—was inaccurate and unsatisfactory; but it was eminently readable, even elegant, and certainly well adapted to introduce this strange foreign poet to an audience which must necessarily have experienced a shock on first acquaintance with him. The second translation—also in prose—appeared in 1754–55, and had as its author Louis Racine, the son of the great poet. Racine gave himself great pains with his work; he studied the Latin and Italian versions of *Paradise Lost*, and wrote a sensible and discriminating *Discours sur le Paradis perdu*, which is, on the whole, the best French contribution to Milton

[1] Subsequent translations were published by Élie de Joncourt, 1754, and L. Racine, 1755.

[2] C. F. Constantin de Magny, *Dissertation critique sur le Paradis perdu*, Paris, 1729; B. R*** [Routh], *Lettres critiques sur le Paradis perdu et reconquis de Milton*, Paris, 1731. In 1729 Niceron summed up what was then generally known of Milton in his *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres*, ii (1729), pp. 145–61.

[3] As to whether the translation was made by Dupré de Saint-Maur, by the Abbé de Boismorand, or by both. Telleen gathers the evidence together, *l. c.*, pp. 25 ff. The translation was well received by the French journals (*Mercure de France*, 1729, pp. 2882 ff.; *Journal littéraire*, xiv (1729), pp. 337 ff., and xv (1730), pp. 353 ff.; *Mémoires de Trévoux*, 1730, p. 1423); Spence (*Anecdotes*, ed. 1820, p. 36) states on the authority of the Chevalier de Ramsay: 'Since the translation of *Paradise Lost* into French, Milton begins to be greatly admired at Paris;' and Rollin inserted into the later editions of his *De la manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les belles-lettres* (e. g. 1740, vol. i, p. 233) a paragraph in praise of Milton. Reviews of Racine's translation will be found in the *Année littéraire*, 1755, vi, pp. 190 ff., and *Mémoires de Trévoux*, November, 1755, p. 2760.

criticism in the eighteenth century. Here, again, it might be noted that it is Milton's theology which gives most offence. But the want of freedom which straining after greater accuracy brought with it gave Racine's work a laboured impression which made it compare unfavourably with the earlier translation. So Dupré de Saint-Maur continued to hold the first place in the esteem of the French public. As early as 1730, *Paradise Lost* was supplemented by translations of *Paradise Regained*, *Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Lycidas*, and the *Hymn on the Nativity*; but these, by the Abbé Mareuil, were unfortunately indifferent in quality and attracted comparatively little attention.

Thus, from the critical years 1728–30 onwards, Milton was a well-known poet in France, perhaps the best known of all foreign poets;[1] yet the eighteenth century passed away before a really satisfactory translation of any of his works appeared. In spite of the interest which the French showed in Milton, the actual influence of the poet on French literature remained small and unimportant, imitations of *Paradise Lost* such as Durand's *La Chute de l'homme*, *La Christiade* by the Abbé de la Beaume (1753), or *Le Messie* by Dubourg (1777), are mediocrity itself, and will hardly bear comparison even with the religious epics of Bodmer and Lavater in Germany. It was clear that Milton's genius had, after all, no very firm hold on the French mind in the eighteenth century; and France could point to no criticism of Milton which penetrated beneath the surface or encompassed his poetic genius until the rise of the new romantic generation of poets and critics about a hundred years ago.

Meanwhile, two other peoples in Europe, the Italians and the Germans, were interesting themselves in Milton,[2] and in their appreciation of the poet were striking out into paths of their own; they showed themselves far less dependent on the pronouncements of the Voltairean oracle in the case of Milton at this early period than

[1] The various translations of the eighteenth century are discussed at adequate length by Telleen, *l. c.*, pp. 64 ff. *Paradise Lost* was translated by Le Roy (verse), 1775; Beaulaton (verse), 1778; Mosneron (prose), 1786; Luneau de Boisjermain (prose), 1798. A free translation of *Paradise Regained* (in verse) was published by Lancelin in 1755, under the title *Le Triomphe de Jésus-Christ dans le Désert*. More popular than any of these was the paraphrase by Madame du Boccage, *Le Paradis terrestre* (1748). There is, it might also be noted, an echo of the Lauder controversy in the *Journal étranger* of 1754 (October–November).

[2] A recent work, *Giovanni Milton e l'Italia*, by Ettore Allodoli, Prato, 1907, gives a survey of the poet's relations to Italy. For Germany, the only publication dealing with the subject—apart from contributions to periodicals—is a dissertation by Gustav Jenny, *Miltons Verlornes Paradies in der deutschen Literatur des* 18. *Jahrhunderts*, St. Gallen, 1890. This, however, makes no attempt to cover the field.

in the case of Shakespeare. It was, in fact, the Italians rather than the French who were the pioneers of a true critical appreciation of Milton on the Continent. At the beginning of the eighteenth century there were many literary ties between Italy and England, ties in some respects quite as strong as those established by the Huguenot emigrants between England and France. Lorenzo Magalotti, Anton Maria Salvini, the Abbate Conti, Paolo Rolli, the translator of Milton, and Voltaire's friend Count Algarotti, had all either spent part of their lives in England, or were actively interested in English literature. The appearance of Rolli's translation of *Paradise Lost* gave a great impetus to Italian interest, and filled the Italian journals with informing notes and articles concerning the poet, which do not always give indication of having filtered through French periodicals.[1] *Del Paradiso perduto*, translated into unrimed verse by Paolo Rolli, was published in London in a sumptuous folio volume in the year 1735, and attracted a great deal of attention, not merely in literary Italy, but in England itself, for Rolli was Italian tutor to the English royal family and evidently a *persona grata* at court.[2] This may fairly be called the best translation of Milton which the eighteenth century produced. Its chief fault, and a serious one, but imperfectly atoned for by the author's frankly expressed intention, is an extreme literalness, which tends occasionally to harshness, and offends against the spirit of Italian style and language; but it was the only translation into verse which succeeded in reproducing the dignity and sublimity of the original without falling into bombast.

Even greater significance must be attached to the points of agreement between Italian criticism and Milton's practice. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Italian critical theory, which, with the help of the Arcadians, had emerged from the vicious circles of Marinism, and passed through the scathing fire of French attacks

[1] See, for instance, the *Novelle della Repubblica delle Lettere*, Venice, 1730, pp. 76, 165, 206 f., 241 ff., 251 ff.

[2] Six years earlier, in 1729, Rolli published in London a translation of the first six books of *Paradise Lost*; but this I have not been able to see. The edition of 1735 was reprinted in 1740 at Paris and in 1742 at Verona. On Rolli see Allodoli, *l. c.*, pp. 92 ff. and 140 ff. Lorenzo Magalotti also began a translation of *Paradise Lost* (see *Giornale de' Letterati*, xiii (1713), p. 144, S. Fermi, *Lorenzo Magalotti*, Piacenza, 1903, pp. 251 f., and Allodoli, *l. c.*, p. 140). Anton Maria Salvini had likewise, if Bodmer is to be trusted (preface to the first edition of his translation of *Paradise Lost*), the intention of translating the epic, and C. Cordaro (*A. M. Salvini*, Piacenza, 1906, p. 44) mentions that fragments of a translation of Milton are preserved among Salvini's papers in the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence.

like that of the Père Bouhours, arrived at a stage when it could both appreciate Milton and draw support from him. Gravina had paved the way by his eloquent praise of Homer and Dante, and by his appreciation of qualities in these poets which were not compatible with the rationalism of Boileau's aesthetics; and L. A. Muratori had, in his plea for the supremacy of the imagination, freed epic poetry from a laming materialism and realism. In fact, although Muratori does not—in his *Della perfetta poesia italiana*, at least—mention Milton, that work might have been in great measure intended as a vindication of *Paradise Lost*. When Rolli's translation appeared, the Italians were thus better prepared than any other continental people to read Milton with understanding; and Rolli himself—as did his fellow countryman Baretti years later on behalf of Shakespeare—took up the defence of Milton when Voltaire singled out certain 'barbarian' liberties for special censure in his *Essay*.[1] Rolli's criticism does not, it must be admitted, show much acumen, and although he had some well-meaning ideas on the scope of epic poetry and the unreasonableness of the French limitations, ideas familiar in the more advanced Italian criticism of the time, he was but ill-equipped to meet so vigilant and unsparing an adversary as Voltaire. It is, however, significant for the kind of attention which Milton attracted in Italy, that Rolli believed he was doing the best service to the cause of Italian poetry, and especially of Tasso, by refuting Voltaire's fault-finding with Milton.

Unfortunately, this excellent beginning of Italian criticism in the early eighteenth century did not fulfil its promise. Muratori, Gravina, Conti, and others had familiarized their countrymen with a conception of the epic which justified Tasso and removed all obstacles from the way of an ungrudging appreciation of Milton; but the following generation of critics, men like Francesco Quadrio, Count Algarotti, and Saverio Bettinelli,[2] fell back once more on Voltaire. They had nothing for *Paradise Lost* but, at the best, cold patronage, and, at the worst, impertinent ridicule. Even that encyclo-

[1] Rolli's reply to Voltaire was written in English: *Remarks upon M. Voltaire's Essay on the Epic Poetry of the European Nations*. By Paul Rolli, London, 1728. It was subsequently appended in translation to Rolli's *Paradiso perduto*. It ought also to be added that the latter was accompanied by a succinct and accurate Life of Milton. Baretti's *Dissertation upon the Italian Poetry*, London, 1753, also takes up the defence of Milton against Voltaire.

[2] F. S. Quadrio, *Storia e ragione d'ogni poesia*, iv (1749), pp. 285 ff.; F. Algarotti's correspondence in his *Opere*, Venice, 1791–4, x, pp. 39, 125 f.; S. Bettinelli, *Opere*, Venice, 1799, iv (*Dell' entusiasmo delle belle arti*), pp. 11, 76, 210, 313; xii (*Lettere inglesi*), pp. 172, 313. Cp. Allodoli, *l.c.*

paedic critic, the Abbate Giovanni Andres, or rather Juan Andrés —he was a Spanish Jesuit who wrote in Italian—is clearly under the influence of Voltaire in his judgements of English writers, but he at least claims for Milton the distinction of being the greatest of all English poets.[1] The stimulus of the earlier and more adventurous critics was not, however, lost; and it is to be traced more clearly outside Italy than in Italy itself. In Spain, for instance, Ignacio de Luzán, one of Muratori's most distinguished disciples, was the first Spaniard to draw attention to Milton,[2] and, in Germany, Johann Jakob Bodmer, who also owed his most vital ideas to Muratori, first created that interest in the English poet which Berge, nearly forty years before, had failed to awaken.

It cannot be said that the interest of Spain in Milton during the eighteenth century was more than an indifferent curiosity. As Luzán had translated parts of *Paradise Lost* in prose, so José de Cadalso translated some passages in verse; Luis José de Velázquez mentions, in his *Orígenes de la Poesía Castellana* (1754), a translation of *Paradise Lost* by Alonso Dalda as being 'the only translation from the English that we have', and Arteaga refers to another by Antonio Palazuelos; but neither of these is apparently to be traced, and it is not unreasonable to infer that they were never published.[3] On the other hand, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos translated the first book of *Paradise Lost*,[4] and the influence of Milton is to be seen in the work of Juan Meléndez Valdés, especially in his epics, *La Creación* and *La Caída de Luzbel*.[5] Of Spanish criticism of Milton

[1] G. Andres, *Dell' origine, progressi e stato attuale d'ogni letteratura*, Parma, 1782–5, i, pp. 418 f.; ii, pp. 74, 103, 159–64. 'Il Milton è realmente il più gran genio, di cui possa tenersi onorata l'inglesa poesia. La vastità dell' impresa ed alcuni passi sublimi del 'Paradiso perduto' gli danno la superiorità sopra tutti gli altri suoi nazionali' (ii, p. 74).

[2] See Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de las ideas estéticas en España*, v, 2nd ed., Madrid, 1903, pp. 29, 175.

[3] *Orígenes de la Poesía Castellana*, 2nd ed., Malaga, 1797, p. 128. See also Menéndez y Pelayo, *l.c.*, vi (1904), p. 89.

[4] G. M. de Jovellanos, *Obras* (*Bibl. de Autores Españoles*, xlvi), 1858, pp. 26 ff.

[5] See L. A. de Cueto-Valmar, *Historia crítica de la poesía castellana en el siglo XVIII*, Madrid, 1893, i, p. 407. See also Meléndez' letters to Jovellanos in Cueto-Valmar, *l. c.*, iii, pp. 59, 61, 77 f. There are Spanish translations of *Paradise Lost* by J. de Escoiquiz, three vols., Bourges, 1812; B. Ramón de Hermida, two vols., Madrid, 1814; A. Galindo, Gante, 1868; D. San Martin, Madrid, 1882; and D. San Juan, Barcelona, 1883. Translations into Portuguese by J. A. de Silva (also of *Paradise Regained*), two vols., Lisbon, 1789; F. B. M. Targini, two vols., Paris, 1823; and A. J. de Lima Leitão, two vols., Lisbon, 1840. For my references to Milton in Spain I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. James Fitzmaurice-Kelly.

there is even less to say: and probably such opinions as the Spaniards formed of Milton at the end of the eighteenth century were drawn mainly from the Spanish translation of Andres' Italian work, which had considerable influence in Spain.[1] At a later date, Manuel José de Quintana discussed Milton from the standpoint of French classicism in his *Variedades de Ciencias, Literatura y Artes*,[2] and became involved in a controversy with Blanco White.[3]

The question as to how Bodmer in Switzerland came to be attracted by Milton is one of considerable importance; for it is closely bound up with the larger question of the origins of modern German critical theory. These are to be sought, by no means exclusively, as has hitherto been assumed, in England, but also to a large extent in Italy. As a young man, Bodmer had spent happy days in Italy, ineffectually preparing himself for a mercantile career, but browsing to his heart's content on Italian books; the poetry and critical literature of Italy made him a man of letters and gave his thoughts that trend which they never subsequently lost. His interest in Milton, fanned into enthusiasm as it was at a somewhat later date by the study of Addison, was undoubtedly awakened in the first instance by his Italian friends.[4] It was, above all, Muratori who opened the eyes of Bodmer and his fellow-worker Breitinger to the immense significance of Milton for the liberation of the poetic imagination which had been so long fettered by the rules of pseudo-classicism; it was to a large extent due to the influence of the Italians that Bodmer was induced to translate *Paradise Lost*, and to set up that poem as an exemplar of the 'miraculous' in poetry. From Muratori Bodmer borrowed his doctrine of the 'fantasy' which he found so magnificently illustrated in Milton's poem; Calepio taught him that the dicta of French classicism were by no means the incontrovertible dogmas they appeared to the greater part of literary Europe; even Dubos' ideas seem to have in part reached Bodmer through Italian channels; while Conti drew his attention to the dramatic genius of the English 'Sasper'.

With these stimulating ideas in his mind, Bodmer turned to *Paradise Lost*. After some difficulty he obtained a copy of the

[1] On Andres in Spain, see Menéndez y Pelayo, *l. c.*, vi, pp. 13 ff.

[2] *Variedades*, iii (1804), pp. 164 ff., 241 ff., 361 ff.

[3] See *Correo Literario y Económico de Sevilla*, iv, pp. 177 ff., 201 ff., 209 ff. and 217 ff. The occasion of the Quintana-Blanco controversy was an imitation of *Paradise Lost*, *La Inocencia perdida* by Félix José Reinoso (1799). See Cueto-Valmar, *l. c.*, ii, pp. 122 ff.

[4] This inference is to be drawn from the preface to his translation of *Paradise Lost* (1732).

English original, and set to work at once to translate it; and just as Dupré de Saint-Maur had, following the example of Madame Dacier's *Homer*, chosen prose as the medium of his translation, so Bodmer, in 1732, turned Milton into German prose—a clumsy and unwieldy 'Swiss' German, which the author repeatedly polished in subsequent editions, but never succeeded in polishing to any high degree of brightness.[1] It was virtually round this translation of Milton that the famous literary controversy between Bodmer and Breitinger, on the one hand, and the Leipzig professor Gottsched, on the other, took place.[2] Gottsched was at first not unkindly disposed to the Swiss translation,[3] but as soon as he saw how the wind was blowing in Zürich he turned upon Bodmer with a virulence hardly surpassed even by his master Voltaire. To offer Milton to the German public as a curious example of the perversities of genius in a land like England, where good taste was only slowly gaining ingress, would have been pardonable; but to claim Milton as a master and to make *Paradise Lost* serve—and this was virtually what Bodmer and Breitinger did in their clumsy, ill-written tomes dealing with literary and critical theory[4]—as a text for Muratori's subversive theory that the imagination and not the reason was the more important factor in poetry, was quite another matter, and demanded, in Gottsched's eyes, summary treatment. To admit Milton's genius meant, as he very well realized, to endanger the foundations of the classic literature of the seventeenth century.[5]

But Gottsched was in the end worsted, and from the midst of the strife, even from the circle of Gottsched's own followers, there

[1] The data have been brought together by Hans Bodmer in the paper on *Die Anfänge des Bodmerschen Milton* already quoted. See also Th. Vetter, *J. J. Bodmer und die englische Literatur*, in the *Bodmer-Denkschrift*, Zürich, 1900, pp. 315 ff. The full title of the first edition of Bodmer's translation is 'Johann Miltons Verlust des Paradieses. Ein Helden-Gedicht. In ungebundener Rede übersetzet. Zürich, 1732'. Subsequent editions appeared in 1742, 1754, 1759, 1769, and 1780.

[2] The literature on the controversy is extensive: see F. Servaes, *Die Poetik Gottscheds und der Schweizer*, Strassburg, 1887; F. Braitmaier, *Geschichte der poetischen Theorie und Kritik von den Diskursen der Maler bis auf Lessing*, Leipzig, 1888; G. Waniek, *Gottsched und die Literatur seiner Zeit*, Leipzig, 1897.

[3] *Beiträge zur critischen Historie*, &c., i (1732), pp. 190 ff.

[4] Especially Bodmer's *Critische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie*, Zürich, 1740, and his *Abhandlung von der Schreibart in Miltons Verlohrnem Paradiese*, in the *Sammlung critischer, poetischer und andrer geistvollen Schriften*, iii, Zürich, 1742, pp. 75 ff.

[5] See especially the German translation of Bayle's *Dictionary*, which was prepared under Gottsched's supervision, Leipzig, 1741–4, iii, pp. 399 ff; iv, pp. 75, 162, 688 f.

emerged in Klopstock a genuine poet, the fountain-head of whose inspiration was Milton. Klopstock's epic *Der Messias* was the first important German poem of the eighteenth century, and it owed its inception and plan to the controversy about Milton and to the example of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In view of what has already been done by German scholars,[1] it is unnecessary to estimate again Klopstock's indebtedness to his English model. The general conditions of a religious epic as laid down by Milton were accepted *in toto* by Klopstock; the latter's attitude of mind towards the sacred story and his manner of approach are clearly influenced by *Paradise Lost*. The *dramatis personae* of the two epics show many points of resemblance, Klopstock's famous angel Abbadona being modelled on Milton's Abdiel; but with regard to the methods of characterization Klopstock's shadowy, lyric art, which appealed by suggestion, and Milton's vigorous dramatic power of presentation were at opposite poles. It is important, however, to notice that it was just the aspect of Milton's poetry which had appealed so forcibly to Bodmer, namely, his imaginative flights, his grandiose conceptions of heaven and hell, which inspired the finest passages in the *Messias*.

As far as the influence of Milton in Germany is concerned, the popularity of Klopstock's epic confused entirely the issue. From now on the production of religious epics in Germany was considerable—Bodmer himself and Lavater might be mentioned as cultivating this form of literature[2]—and this production undoubtedly kept the German public in touch and familiar with Milton, but there could be no question of an influence of Milton apart from that of his German imitator, and, indeed, one might go so far as to say there was none. In 1762 a new translation of *Paradise Lost* into German hexameters was published by F. W. Zachariä, a writer who had for a time contributed to the same journal—the *Bremer Beiträge*—in which the first three cantos of Klopstock's *Messias* appeared. But in spite of his use of verse Zachariä's work does not show much advance over Bodmer's: his knowledge of English—at least at the time when he made the translation—was insufficient for his task, and he has failed

[1] See especially F. Muncker, *F. G. Klopstock, Geschichte seines Lebens und seiner Schriften*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1900, pp. 117 ff., and cp. B. Zumbini's essay *Il Messia del Klopstock* in *Studi di Letterature straniere*, 2nd ed., Florence, 1907, pp. 153 ff.

[2] Bodmer's *Noah* appeared in 1750; Lavater's *Jesus Messias* in 1783-6, his *Joseph von Arimathia* in 1794. *Paradise Lost* no doubt also appealed strongly to Albrecht von Haller, whose early poetry—especially the didactic *Vom Ursprung des Übels* (1734)—shows Milton's influence.

to reproduce those finer qualities of Milton's verse that had attracted men of larger calibre such as Klopstock. A translation, the last of the eighteenth century in Germany, by S. G. Bürde, published in 1793, is now even more completely forgotten.[1] Thus, in spite of a deeper understanding for Milton's art in Germany than in France, it cannot be said—as it could be in the case of Shakespeare—that the Germans of the eighteenth century showed any superiority to the French as translators. In fact, of all the great poets of the world, Milton has, perhaps, been least satisfactorily translated into German, the reason being not that he is peculiarly untranslatable, but that the vital interest in him had waned before the era of accurate and painstaking translating began.

The only other continental country which, early in the eighteenth century, interested itself in Milton, was Holland. A Dutch translation of *Paradise Lost* in blank verse appeared in 1728 at Haarlem, this being the earliest of all the translations into verse. The author was J. van Zanten. A second translation—or rather paraphrase in Alexandrines of the first, for its author, L. Paludanus, was ignorant of English—was published at Amsterdam in 1730.[2] The previous history of Dutch literature might have led us to anticipate a particularly warm welcome for Milton in Holland, but the influence of *Paradise Lost* on the Dutch literature of the eighteenth century does not seem to have been great, and such influence as did show itself later in the century, probably came by way of Klopstock.

The foregoing survey of the gradual acclimatization of Milton on the Continent of Europe cannot but emphasize the close parallelism between Milton's case and that of Shakespeare. The first period,

[1] The earliest German translation of *Paradise Regained* is by S. Grynaeus, *J. Miltons Wiedererobertes Paradies, nebst desselben Samson und einigen andern Gedichten, wie auch einer Lebens-Beschreibung*, Basel, 1752. In 1781 an anonymous translation appeared at Mannheim. In the nineteenth century *Paradise Lost* was translated into German by J. F. Pries, Rostock, 1813; F. W. Bruckbräu (also *Paradise Regained*), 1828; Rosenzweig, Dresden, 1832; Kottenkamp, Stuttgart, 1841; A. Böttger (with *Paradise Regained*), Leipzig, 1846; B. Schuhmann, Stuttgart, 1855; K. Eitner, Hildburghausen, 1865.

[2] Reviews of these translations will be found in the *Journal littéraire*, xiv (1729), pp. 237 ff., and xv (1730), pp. 245 ff. Copies of both are in the British Museum, as well as of later ones by J. H. Reisig, Zutphen, 1791–1811, and J. F. Schimsheimer. Through the courtesy of Professor H. J. C. Grierson I am able to add some references to Milton in Dutch literature kindly sent by Professor G. Kalff of Leyden: P. Huizinga Bakker, *Poëzy*, Amsterdam, 1773, iii, pp. 115 ff.; H. van Alphen, *Theorie der schoone Kunsten* (an adaptation of a German work), 1778, p. xi; J. D. Macquet, *Proeven van dichtkundige Letteroefeningen*, 1780–83, ii, p. 88 ff.; W. Bilderdijk, *De Echt*, 1812 (*Dichtwerken*, 1856–59, vii); and W. de Clercq's *Dagboek* (1812), ed. A. Pierson, 1888, I, p. 34.

when Milton was virtually only known as a dangerous political writer, corresponds with the period during which Shakespeare was little more than a name to the continental peoples. In both cases it was Voltaire who stimulated a wider interest; it pleased his vanity to pose as the discoverer of these new literary wonders, but as soon as others—often with deeper understanding and more genuine sympathy than he—came forward to espouse the cause of the English poets, Voltaire turned round, and atoned for his earlier advocacy by proclaiming, with a hostility that was intensified as time went on, the gospel of good taste and common sense, and the supremacy of the reason. Again, as in the case of Shakespeare, we find Milton taking an extraordinarily firm hold on the German mind of the later eighteenth century, becoming bound up with every literary controversy that involved the progress of German poetry; whereas in France the most vital period for Milton's, as well as for Shakespeare's influence, is to be sought in the nineteenth century. But to sum up exactly what Milton meant for continental literatures in the eighteenth century, to trace his modifying and remoulding influence, especially on the literatures of France and Germany, is by no means easy. Works have been enumerated in these literatures which may be described as either direct or indirect imitations of Milton's art and style; but, as has been seen, France produced virtually no poem of even second or third rank modelled on *Paradise Lost*, and if we are obliged to give the *Messias* of Klopstock the first place among imitations of Milton it is less because of its intrinsic value than of its relative value for the poetry of its time and country. But the vital and life-giving influence of Milton is to be sought elsewhere. It was he who, more than any other poet, gave the sober rationalism of the earlier eighteenth century a tincture of fantasy. Just as, by reinforcing the Italian critics, Milton had broken the fetters of pseudo-classicism in theory, so he became at a later period an example to the young poets who were minded to do likewise. Even Voltaire himself, with all his antagonism, would never have dared his own higher imaginative flights had it not been for the abhorred examples of Shakespeare and Milton; occasionally in his epic and dramatic poetry we feel that he has the superhuman figures and the sublime *milieu* of *Paradise Lost* in his memory. In Germany this influence is more obvious and marked, although it came in most cases, as we have seen, through Klopstock; but, whether the immediate source was the *Messias* or *Paradise Lost* itself, there is no doubt that those Titanic figures with which Goethe's imagination wrestled in his early days at Frankfort—Prometheus, Mahomet, Faust—owe

not a little of their grandeur to Milton. Mephistopheles without Satan is as unthinkable as the cosmic framework of *Faust* without Milton's world as its model.

When we turn to the nineteenth century, a marked contrast presents itself between the history of Shakespeare's fame abroad and Milton's. While Shakespeare went on extending his kingdom, invading the most remote of languages, and gaining a footing on the national theatres of almost every civilized people, Milton's fame became in Europe, with the exception of France and, to some extent, Italy, a purely literary and bookish matter. The difficulty in the case of most of the smaller European literatures was that they had not shown any receptivity for English literary ideas until the eighteenth century was well-nigh over; and by that time the religious epic, and indeed the epic generally, had ceased to be a form of poetry into which a nation poured by preference its best inspirations. At the same time, it is strange that the Scandinavian peoples—especially when we remember the almost puritanic religious revival which affected the north, and more particularly Norway, early in the nineteenth century—should have been so little influenced by Milton, and that such influence as can be traced, came rather, as in the case of other literatures, by way of Klopstock.[1] In Germany, again, Milton had at the close of the eighteenth century expended his stimulating force, and had also lost his former interest for the literary classes. Wearied by the long-drawn-out publication of *Der Messias* in the previous century, the younger generation was inclined to regard the religious epic with indifference, if not with actual dislike. Neither Goethe nor Schiller in riper years advanced beyond a cold and critical attitude towards *Paradise Lost*, and the Roman Catholic and unpuritanic religious atmosphere of the German romantic movement precluded naturally that warm partizanship which was extended so readily to Shakespeare and Calderón. Germany was even more at the mercy of foreign influences in the nineteenth century than in the eighteenth: Shakespeare, Byron, Scott, Chateaubriand, Hugo, all left deep traces on her literature, but not so the poet of *Paradise Lost*. And this seems to have been true in general of all the Germanic peoples. Translations of Milton were welcomed by all interested in the great literature of the past, but no single German, Dutch, or Scandinavian poet was gripped by Milton's genius as, for instance, Chateaubriand

[1] *Paradise Lost* was translated into Danish by J. H. Schönheyder in 1790 (also *Paradise Regained*, 1792); into Icelandic by Jón Þorláksson in 1828; into Swedish by J. G. Oxenstierna, 1815; while both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* were translated into the last-mentioned language by V. E. Öman in 1862.

was in France. Still fainter was the influence of Milton in Slavonic lands, for although these had not, like the Western European nations, outgrown the epic, Milton's uncompromising Puritanism, perhaps even the very vigour of his imagination, was not palatable to the lyric and melancholy genius of the race. Byron here, as generally in the south of Europe, was a more actual and impressive force than Milton had ever been.

But in France, as has been indicated, it was otherwise. One might even go so far as to say that the French literature of the first twenty or thirty years of the nineteenth century represents the most intense period of Miltonic influence on any alien literature. And the centre of the enthusiasm for Milton was Chateaubriand, who 'for thirty years of his life had read, re-read, and translated Milton'.[1] Madame de Staël rang in the new era with some noble words on Milton in her treatise *De la littérature* (1800),[2] but it was Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* which gave the emigrant literature its Miltonic stamp and colouring. With warm, enthusiastic, and affectionate penetration, Chateaubriand eulogized *Paradise Lost* in that work as it had never been eulogized before. The epic to him is, as a form of literature, superior to the drama, and Milton he would even place above Homer. But this was not Chateaubriand's first pronouncement upon Milton: in 1797 he had published his poem *Milton et Davenant*, and he had also given promise of his future appreciations in the *Essai sur la littérature anglaise* and in his criticism of Young (1801). His own prose epic, *Les Martyrs* (1809), is visibly inspired by Milton, and his essay *De quelques imperfections du 'Paradis perdu'* contains the warmest praise of all, for, not content with pointing out the 'imperfections', it also justifies them. In 1836 appeared Chateaubriand's own translation of *Paradise Lost*, which may without difficulty be claimed as the best translation of the poem into French prose.[3] But as a translator Chateaubriand was not alone; translation after translation seemed to spring up out of the ground in those days in France, amongst them a notable one into French verse by the poet Jacques Delille, which appeared in 1804–5, shortly after the *Génie du Christianisme*. The French critical organs were constantly occupied in discussing Milton, and, indeed, so actual and real did Milton's world become to these men that they saw in it an apt reflection of the

[1] Preface to the *Essai sur la littérature anglaise*, *Œuvres complètes*, ix, p. 2. There is an excellent chapter on Chateaubriand and Milton in Dr. Telleen's book.

[2] *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, 1820–1, iv, pp. 309 f.

[3] See *Œuvres complètes*, vols. viii and ix.

political events of their own day.[1] The enthusiasm of Chateaubriand was infectious; it passed over to other leading men of letters of the first half of the century. The dominant religious trend of Lamartine's mind would, one might have thought, have made him peculiarly receptive to Milton's influence; but that influence does not seem to have led to any direct imitation of Milton in Lamartine's poetic works; in this respect, Ossian was a much more important source of inspiration than the poet of *Paradise Lost*.[2] On the other nand, A. de Vigny was no doubt in his own epic poetry directly influenced by Milton, whom he introduced into his novel *Cinq-Mars*;[3] while Victor Hugo, in the famous manifesto of the *école romantique*, the Preface to *Cromwell* (1827), extends to Milton some of the enthusiasm he expresses for Shakespeare.[4] This admiration of Milton spread in some degree to other Latin countries at the beginning of the nineteenth century, notably to Italy, where between 1800 and 1830 there were almost as many new translations of Milton as in France.[5] Here Vincenzo Monti was a warm admirer of Milton, and in his own poetry shows constant traces of Milton's example.[6]

Milton was thus one of the forces which moulded the French emigrant literature and the more brilliant romantic poetry that followed it, perhaps an even greater force in stimulating the French imagination and the moral and religious forces that lay behind the literary revival than Shakespeare himself. It is difficult to keep asunder the many delicate threads of literary influence which manifest themselves in a modern period of literary history, and impossible to dogmatize with certainty as to the first source of any vitalizing poetic thought; but a generalization might in the present case be hazarded: of the three chief forces which influenced the French romantic move-

[1] Professor F. Baldensperger, of Lyons, draws my attention to this interesting testimony to Milton's actuality. The Council of the Devils seemed, for instance, to the *émigrés* the very likeness of the Comité de Salut Public (Clémenceau, *Le Vengeur des rois*, London, 1801, chant I^er^, str. lv; Un officier de cavalerie, *De l'influence de la philosophie sur les forfaits de la Révolution*, Paris, n.d., p. 66).

[2] Lamartine's *Héloïse et Abélard* (1864) contains an essay on Milton.

[3] *Cinq-Mars*, Paris, 1826, chapter xx and conclusion.

[4] Milton is also one of the characters of the drama.

[5] Allodoli enumerates no less than twelve between those of Silvio Martinengo and L. A. Corner, in 1803, and Andrea Maffei's in 1863. Mention should also be made here of a volume of Milton criticism by F. Scolari, *Saggio di critica sul Paradiso Perduto di Giovanni Milton*, Venice, 1818. For French translations in the nineteenth century, see Telleen, *l.c.*, pp. 122 ff.

[6] Monti's *La Bellezza dell' universo* and *Prometeo* are clearly influenced by Milton. See B. Zumbini, *Sulle poesie di Vincenzo Monti*, Florence, 1886, pp. 3 ff., 107 ff. Cp. also V. Monti, *Opere*, vi, Milan, 1842, pp. 459 ff., and Allodoli, *l.c.*, pp. 123 ff.

ment from without, Shakespeare provided a poetic world rich in fancy and humour, and never out of touch with reality, the German poets satisfied the fantastic cravings of the romantic mood, while Milton deepened and reinvigorated the French imagination and taught it how to soar. His contribution to the French romantic ideas was thus in some respects the most fundamental and vital of all, but as a consequence it manifested itself more among those writers who prepared the French mind for the seeds of romanticism than in the romanticists themselves. Without what Milton had to give, it is difficult to see how the French could have become within the short space of a generation in so high a degree receptive to the imaginative world of Shakespeare and Goethe. Milton, in other words, helped to bridge the gulf that separated the negative critical spirit of the age of Voltaire from the positive and constructive epoch of romanticism. He deepened the national imagination, which had grown shallow and cynical; he helped to bring back to France that faith in God and man which the Encyclopaedists, followed by the Revolution, had destroyed; and he inspired Chateaubriand with the best elements in that most hopeful and promising of all the books which opened the new century, the *Génie du Christianisme*. This would seem to be Milton's peculiar mission at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and, in so far as he succeeded, he must be counted among the fundamental forces behind the evolution of our own age.[1]

[1] It is beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss the contributions of foreign nations to the scholarly investigation and criticism of Milton's life and work, but mention might be made of A. Geffroy, *Étude sur les pamphlets politiques et religieux de Milton*, Paris, 1848; E. de Guerle, *Milton, sa vie et ses œuvres*, Paris, 1868; Taine's criticism in his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, ii, pp. 327–435; and E. Scherer's essay on *Milton et le Paradis perdu* (*Études sur la littérature contemporaine*, vol. vi, pp. 151 ff., Paris, 1876), in French; A. Stern's *Milton und seine Zeit*, three vols., Leipzig, 1877–9, in German; and B. Zumbini's essay in *Studi di letterature straniere*, 2nd ed., Florence, 1907, pp. 61 ff., in Italian.

MILTON IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (1701–1750)

By EDWARD DOWDEN

Read December 10, 1908.

MILTON IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (1701-1750)

By EDWARD DOWDEN

Read December 10, 1908.

The influence of Milton on the literature of the eighteenth century was threefold—an influence on poetic style, independent in a great degree of poetic matter and therefore not wholly favourable to literature, during the first half of the century, felt in the main by writers who were not in a high sense original; secondly, an influence alike on sentiment and style, which formed one of the many affluents of the Romantic movement of the second half of the century, or, to be more exact, from about 1740 onwards; thirdly, an influence on thought, appearing at irregular intervals, but always associated with political liberalism or radicalism, from Birch and Benson and James Thomson to Hollis, Archdeacon Blackburne, and William Godwin in England, and to Mirabeau in France. The first of these modes of influence is chiefly connected with *Paradise Lost*, the second with Milton's earlier poems, the third with his prose writings.

Milton scholarship had more to do in the eighteenth than in the nineteenth century, and, setting aside the work of David Masson on Milton's life, it did much more in the earlier than in the later period. The first critical study in detail of an English poem is probably that by Addison of *Paradise Lost*. The first variorum edition of an English poet is Newton's edition of Milton. Early texts were collated, the Cambridge manuscripts were examined, sources were investigated, conjectural emendations were proposed, explanatory notes and parallels from classical, English, and Italian writers were accumulated, points of punctuation and peculiar spelling were considered, a verbal index was compiled, the poet's versification was studied, by the successive scholars of the eighteenth century. When Todd's first edition appeared in 1801 the harvest had in great measure been garnered. Even the excursions and alarms connected with Bentley's castigation

of *Paradise Lost*, with Lauder's forgeries, with Peck's ascription to Milton of a translation of Buchanan's *Baptistes*, and with the harsher sentences of Johnson's life of the poet, indicate the interest which was felt in all that concerned him. And if Addison was occupied with Milton's greatest English poem in years not far from the opening of the century, Cowper was engaged upon his Latin poetry in years which drew towards its close. The notes made in this paper touch only on work of the years from 1701 to 1750.

By the opening of the eighteenth century the fame of the author of *Paradise Lost* was established. Six editions of that poem had been published; it had received a commentary from Patrick Hume and pictorial illustrations of folio size, not of high excellence, but in the taste of the time; it had been translated into German; it had been translated into Latin. The Minor Poems had appeared in at least three editions. The Prose Works—English and Latin—had been collected in stately volumes. Milton had been eulogized in prose and in verse by Dryden. Somers and Atterbury had promoted the publication of the folio *Paradise Lost*, for which there were no fewer than five hundred subscribers. The publisher, Tonson, afterwards declared that the volume 'was so well received, notwithstanding the price was four times greater than before, [that] the sale increased double the number every year'. Aubrey had collected notes relating to Milton's life; Anthony Wood had given him a place in the *Athenae*; a biography by Edward Phillips was prefixed to the *Letters of State* in 1694; a fuller biography by Toland was published in 1698; three and a half large pages were devoted to Milton—the adversary of Salmasius—by Bayle in his *Dictionary*; before long Milton was to take his place in a new edition of Morhof's *Polyhistor*. And it should be remembered that Milton's fame rose in spite of the hostility awakened in many quarters by his political and, to some extent, by his religious opinions. When Phillips printed for the first time in 1694 the sonnet to Cromwell, it was considered expedient to omit the line which tells of trophies reared on the neck of crowned Fortune. When the prose works were printed in London, it seemed the part of discretion to name 'Amsterdam' on the title-page. When, in 1692, *A Defence of the People of England* was translated and printed without a publisher's name, the anonymous publisher added the titles of a list of books useful to correct the impression left by Milton of 'so great a Prince and so glorious a Martyr as the late King Charles the First'. The author of *The Vision of Purgatory* in 1680 placed Milton in that uncomfortable region, where he is discovered in earnest discourse with a Provincial of the Jesuits. The author of *Remarks on Toland's Life of*

Milton is more angry with the biographer than with the subject of his biography, but already the title 'Socinian' as well as that of 'Republican' is connected with Milton's name. When Winstanley represents the fame of Milton as having gone out like a candle in snuff, he knows that this effect defective came by cause—Milton was 'a most notorious traitor, and most impiously and villainously belied the blessed martyr, King Charles the First'. Grudging praise is given to Milton by Langbaine in 1691: 'Had his principles been as good as his parts, he had been an excellent person', but when Gildon a few years later edits Langbaine's *Dramatick Poets* the note is changed; Milton is now 'an author of that excellence of genius and learning, that none of any age or nation, I think, has excel'd him'.

So the seventeenth century closed, and the eighteenth century opens with a writer too frequently forgotten in connexion with the criticism of Milton. Dennis—not Addison—leads the way. And Dennis's point of view is of considerable interest. Through him the study of Milton connects itself with that quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns in France, which constitutes a kind of prologue to the history throughout the eighteenth century of the idea of human progress, an idea playing no unimportant part in the thought of the period. Dennis deplored the low estate to which English poetry had fallen at the date of Dryden's death. It seemed to him contemptible as art, and he knew that poetry, especially dramatic poetry, had within recent years offended against morals by grossness of sentiment and obscenity of language. The artistic poverty and the ethical offence, Dennis thought, were not unconnected. But how should poetry be reformed? For some of the aesthetic aberrations an observance of 'the Rules' might be a remedy; the rules are only nature and reason methodized. But poetry of a high order springs from the passions; it is here that true reformation must begin. The deepest and the loftiest passions of our nature are those connected with religion. That reform and that advancement of poetry which Dennis desired were, he maintained, to be hoped for especially from the inspiring influence of religious feeling and a sacred theme. He remembered the warnings of Boileau against decorating with ornament 'the terrible mysteries of the Christian faith', his warnings against the 'criminal mixture' of poetic fiction with sacred truth; and undoubtedly it is a hard matter to contrive 'machines' for an epic poem on a Christian subject. But if Boileau meant more than this, he was an erring guide. Dennis admits that the ancient poets excelled the modern; they did so because, in the first place, observing the rules, they were true to nature, and, in the second, they took

advantage of the enthusiasm derived from religion. But there is no reason why the order of comparative excellence should not be reversed; the Pagan religions were false; the Christian religion is true; and no one can question that the inspiration which springs from truth is of a nobler kind than that communicated by falsehood. The fact is obvious to reason; but, in addition to this, it has been established by one majestic example—that of a modern poet who surpassed all the ancients and all the moderns—our English Milton. Having cited in support of his doctrine a passage from *Paradise Lost*, the critic breaks forth: 'At the same time that the eye is ravishingly entertained, admiration is raised to a height and the reason is supremely satisfied.'

With these ardent words of John Dennis the criticism of Milton in the eighteenth century is introduced. They appear in his discourse on *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*, published in 1701, and dedicated to one who was himself a reformer, Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave. Dennis hoped to follow this with a much larger treatise, a volume in folio, to be published by subscription under the title *A Criticism upon our most celebrated English Poets Deceas'd.* A Proposal, with a specimen of the work, was issued, Dennis choosing as his specimen 'the substance of what will be said in the Beginning of the criticism of Mil-ton.'[1] Garth and others did something to obtain the half-guineas in advance from subscribers, to be followed by a second half-guinea on publication. The list includes some distinguished names, but the total number of persons who made the financial venture—some eighty and odd—did not seem to warrant the outlay necessary for a folio volume. During three months after the last subscription had come in Dennis worked on; then he lost heart, and printed in octavo (1704), with the Proposal and Specimen, a fragment of the great work, but a fragment in itself complete, entitled *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry.* As in the earlier volume, so here he is concerned with the reformation and advancement of modern poetry, but he now distinguishes between the 'Greater' poetry, consisting of epic, tragedy, and the greater ode, and the 'Less', which includes comedy, the little ode, and satire. Milton, whose work belongs to the nobler order of poetry, is described as 'one of the greatest and most daring Genius's that has appeared in the World'; *Paradise Lost* is 'the greatest poem that ever was written by Man'; the author 'made his Country a glorious present of the most lofty, but most irregular, Poem that has been produc'd by the Mind of Man'. It is irregular because the superhuman theme

[1] I preserve the hyphened 'Mil-ton' of Dennis for Baconians, who have ascertained that 'Shake-speare' was a different person from the actor 'Shakspere'.

and superhuman characters do not permit an adherence to the rules of Aristotle, which rules Milton knew well and esteemed highly, but deliberately decided to disregard as inapplicable to his subject. It was not here that the poet's chief error lay; so long as he draws his enthusiasm from the highest religious conceptions he soars with no middle flight, and may soar free of the rules. But towards the close of the poem he descends from the wondrous works of God to tell, through the angel's speeches, and Adam's visions, of the works of corrupted man, from which could be derived no sort of enthusiasm; and least of all 'that admiration and terror which give the principal greatness and elevation to poetry'. It may be that when Philomela, whom unpoetical mortals knew then as Elizabeth Singer and afterwards as Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe, published her *Divine Hymns and Poems* in 1704, 'in imitation of Mr. Milton,' she was responding to the pleadings of Dennis in his earlier discourse. He was himself a contributor to her volume.

Addison's papers in *The Spectator* were written not because *Paradise Lost* was unknown, but rather because it was well enough known to make many readers wish to know it better. Those of us who watched the growth of Robert Browning's fame can remember that the time when editors of reviews and magazines were most desirous to obtain an appreciation (as it is called) or an interpretation was not when he was the peculiar possession of a few admirers, but when he was widely read, and yet read with an imperfect comprehension which rendered the question void of offence—Understandest thou what thou readest? Several years before the *Spectator* papers appeared, the author of *The English Theophrastus* represented the aspirant to wit and critical talent of that date as slighting Shakespeare, Jonson, and Dryden, but he is 'a great admirer of the incomparable Milton', and 'fondly endeavours to imitate his Sublime'. Addison does not argue the position, but assumes at the outset, as something granted, that 'the first place among our English poets is due to Milton'. He was not the writer to force anything upon a reluctant public in a paper which had become popular. His mode of procedure was somewhat tentative; he did not feel sure that he could sustain the interest of his readers during a long series of articles, and he announced that the series would close with the seventh number. His bookseller assured him that for these papers there was an unusual demand. In fact the Saturdays of more than four months—eighteen numbers—were devoted to *Paradise Lost*. Addison had the advantage over Dennis of being unencumbered with a theory; he could insinuate his feeling for the beauties of the poem by more persuasive touches. He differed

from his predecessor by finding that Milton had in the main observed the rules of epic poetry; but he agrees with Dennis in thinking that the poem flags in the narrative of the history of mankind towards its close. Undoubtedly Addison contributed much to the intelligent enjoyment of Milton by those who already were prepared to enjoy his poetry; every admirer could justify his admiration by the latest authority. In 1712 Leonard Welsted published his translation of Longinus on the Sublime. Addressing an unnamed friend, who like Addison was a lover of *Chevy Chase*, Welsted refers to the *Spectator* articles. 'It's undoubtedly true of Milton,' he writes, 'that no man ever had a genius so happily form'd for the Sublime. . . . When I view him thus, in his most exalted flights, piercing beyond the boundaries of the Universe, he appears to me as a vast Comet, that for want of room is ready to burst its Orb and grow eccentrick.' Such enthusiasm did not now appear extravagant. But whether Addison's papers did much to widen the circle of Milton's readers in England remains uncertain. The pocket edition of *Paradise Lost*, published shortly before the appearance of the *Spectator* papers, was not succeeded by a new edition for eight years. Within the six years preceding Addison's criticism three editions had been published. Unless, however, we knew the number of copies in each edition, we could not draw a certain conclusion. Addison unquestionably, at a somewhat later date, influenced opinion in France, and prepared the way for translations which before very long were to make their appearance.

'English poetry,' writes Mr. Walter Raleigh, 'went Milton-mad during the earlier half of the eighteenth century.' He refers especially to the influence of Milton's blank verse and Milton's diction on certain poets from the author of *The Splendid Shilling* and *Cyder* onwards. The poetry of the second half of the century went Milton-mad under the influence of the minor poems, and in particular of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Thomas Warton, who edited with a learned devotion Milton's *Poems upon Several Occasions*, maintains that these were little known during the years from 1700 to about 1740. Addison commends *Comus* and mentions *L'Allegro*. Bentley in 1732 cites a line from *Comus*. But not a hemistich, says Warton, is quoted from any of Milton's earlier poems in the collections of those 'who digested the beauties or phrases of English poets from 1655 to 1738 inclusively'. Neither Bysshe, nor Gildon, nor Thomas Hayward in *The British Muse*, he declares, has quoted from those shorter pieces which he himself edited. Warton goes on to tell a story of his father, who once at Magdalen College mentioned in high terms

the volume of Milton's early poems to Digby, an intimate friend of Pope: 'Mr. Digby expressed much surprise that he had never heard Pope speak of them,' and, having questioned Pope as to whether he knew anything of this hidden treasure, he supposed that in this way Pope was led to discover them, for soon *Eloisa to Abelard* came forth (1717), and it was found to be 'sprinkled with epithets and phrases of a new form and sound, pilfered from *Comus* and the *Penseroso*'. Warton regarded it as a 'phenomenon' that Pope, 'a poet not of Milton's pedigree, should be their first copier'. Whatever we may think of Warton's story, it is certain that Pope was intimately acquainted with Milton's earlier poems long before the 'grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn' passed from *Comus* into *Eloisa to Abelard*. In the pastoral *Summer* rough satyrs dance as rough satyrs danced in *Lycidas*. In *Autumn* the 'lab'ring oxen' retreat in their 'loose traces' from the field as the 'laboured ox' of *Comus* came in his 'loose traces' from the furrow. In a variation of a line in the *Essay on Criticism* Phoebus touches trembling ears as he touched trembling ears in *Lycidas*. In *Windsor Forest* fields are 'crown'd with tufted trees' as in *L'Allegro* towers and battlements are bosomed high in 'tufted trees'. Again, in *Windsor Forest* 'sullen Mole' hides his diving flood as 'sullen Mole' in the *Vacation Exercise* ran underneath. In *The Messiah* Isaiah's 'hallowed lips' are 'touched with fire' as in the *Nativity* the altar is 'touched with hallowed fire'. In 1713 Tonson published the pocket edition of Milton's poems other than *Paradise Lost*, but they were easily attainable in the earlier octavo, and before this date Pope's pilferings had begun.

Pope, as Warton expresses it, is not of Milton's pedigree, and, though on occasions he borrows a phrase, he maintains his own manner with excellent discretion. He adopts a happy turn of language, but he does not yield to the influence of Milton's style. The error of Philips and other versifiers was to suppose that 'the numbers of Milton'—the words are Johnson's—'which impress the mind with veneration, combined as they are with subjects of inconceivable grandeur, could be sustained by images which at most can rise only to elegance'. The poetic diction of the eighteenth century, against which Wordsworth made his protest, is in large measure due, as Mr. Raleigh has shown, to the plastering of a Miltonic manner over themes with which it had no proper correspondence. 'The diction which Milton had invented for the rendering of his colossal imaginations was applied indifferently to all subjects—to apple-growing, sugar-boiling, the drainage of the Bedford level, the breeding of negroes, and the distempers of sheep. Thomson in *The Seasons*

had a certain magnificence of his own; but how often when his subject drops to a level does he endeavour to maintain a pomp of language. With the aid of Zippel's recent edition of *The Seasons* it is now easy to trace out his more particular and definite obligations to *Paradise Lost* and to Milton's earlier poems. Young's staccato blank verse was his own; the theatric gestures, the start of histrionic surprise are peculiarly his; yet in his choice of topics and in his way of imagining them he is often under Milton's sway, and not always to his advantage. But Pope was prudent, and stood instinctively on his guard against any influence which might confuse the law of the rimed couplet. The ripples of Canaletto belong to another realm of water than that of the live and shouldering surges of Turner's open sea. 'Milton's style,' observes Pope, as recorded in Spence's *Anecdotes*, 'is not natural; 'tis an exotic style. As his subject lies a good deal out of our world, it has a particular propriety in those parts of the poem: and when he is on earth, when he is describing our parents in Paradise, you see he uses a more natural and easy way of writing. Though his formal style may fit the higher parts of his own poem, it does very ill for others who write on natural and pastoral subjects. Philips in his *Cyder* has succeeded extremely well in his imitation of it, but was quite wrong in endeavouring to imitate it on such a subject.' Pope knew his province and his place. In 1711 he told Caryll in a letter that he had the pictures of Dryden, Milton, and Shakespeare in his chamber that the constant remembrance of them might keep him humble. Whether they produced that desirable effect may be doubtful; but he certainly did not aspire to be Shakespearean or Miltonic.

It is no part of the purpose of this paper to trace the growth of Milton's fame outside England. A branch of that subject is dealt with in Dr. J. Martin Telleen's thesis, *Milton dans la Littérature française*. But Voltaire was in England when he published his *Essay on Epic Poetry*, and in English the book is written. A line of research pursued with zeal to the close of the century—the investigation of Miltonic sources, and especially the sources of *Paradise Lost*—seems to have originated with Voltaire. Milton, he supposed, and stated as a fact, had seen at Florence a representation of the *Adamo* of Andreini, and while the youthful poet had perceived the absurdity of the Italian drama, he yet recognized the majesty of the subject. In the course of time a score of possible sources, ranging from the poems ascribed to Cædmon down to the *Adamo Caduto* of Serafino della Salandra, were named, and Lauder in his forgeries took advantage at a comparatively early date of the curiosity which had

been aroused. In his Introduction to *Paradise Lost*, Masson recites the names of many of these books which have been connected with Milton's epic, and dismisses the scholarship squandered in this field with the summary sentence: 'For the most part it is laborious nonsense'. From his enumeration he omits a work which seems to me to have a better claim for inclusion than many that are mentioned, the *Protoplastus* of Hieronymus Ziegler, which stands first among the Latin *Dramata Sacra*, published at Basel in 1547 under the editorship of Oporinus. Through Charles Diodati, and his uncle Dr. John Diodati, Milton had personal relations with Switzerland, where the book was published. He had himself made some stay at Geneva. He had contemplated many subjects from the Old Testament with a view to dramatic treatment, and such volumes as these—had he happened to see them—could not fail to interest him. Among the dramas here given is a *Samson*, and this also is by Ziegler. It was noticed by Lauder, in his research, partly genuine, partly fraudulent, for Milton's sources, that this Ziegler is mentioned by Milton's nephew, Edward Phillips, in his *Theatrum Poetarum*, as a writer of divers tragi-comedies and other dramatic pieces out of the Old and New Testaments; both *Protoplastus* and *Samson* are named by Phillips. There may be a portion of truth, though much exaggerated, in Lauder's supposition that Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum* is little more than an account of the poetical authors in his uncle's library. Lauder, however, with all his discoveries, failed to see a copy of the *Dramata Sacra*, nor does Todd—at least to the date of his second edition (1809)—appear to have been acquainted with those somewhat rare volumes, which yet were known to Edward Phillips. If Milton ever looked into Ziegler's Latin play he would have found there the whole story of the creation of man and woman, the machinations of Lucifer, Belial, and Satan, the celebration of God's works by Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael, the temptation of Eve, the fall of our first parents, the expulsion from Paradise, and a recital of the long series of woes coming upon the earth, as assigned to the lips of a cherub in the closing scene. Lauder, had he come across the *Protoplastus*, might have made as good a case for Ziegler, among the authors whom Milton plundered, as he did for Ramsay or Masenius.

That Milton had read *Protoplastus* seems a not unreasonable conjecture. But however this may be, I venture to affirm with confidence—and perhaps what I shall say has been already pointed out—that one of the conjectured sources of *Paradise Lost*, commonly referred to as an original Italian drama, is no more than a translation or a rehandling of the *Protoplastus*. Joseph Cooper Walker, author of the *Historical*

Memoir on Italian Tragedy (1799), made William Hayley acquainted with 'a literary curiosity' which he obtained on a recent visit to Italy, *La Scena Tragica d' Adamo ed Eva*, by Troilo Lancetta (Venice, 1644). I have never had an opportunity of seeing Walker's literary curiosity, but Hayley gives an analysis of the play, scene by scene, which may be read in Todd's second edition of Milton's *Poetical Works* (vol. ii, pp. 236–8), and some quotations are made by Walker in the Appendix to his *Memoir on Italian Tragedy*. A comparison of these with Ziegler's Latin drama will leave no doubt on the mind of any student that Lancetta is little more than a translator. In Lancetta's address to the reader occurs a passage which Hayley fancied to have had the effect of turning Milton's mind from his original design of a dramatic treatment of the theme to the epic treatment actually adopted. In a dream Moses appears and assures the sleeper that from such a subject 'an heroic poem worthy of demi-gods' might be formed. This address to the reader is found only in Lancetta, but little reliance can be placed on the ingenious guess of Hayley.

Before Voltaire's *Essay on Epic Poetry* was published Fenton's edition of *Milton's Poems* had appeared, with a short life of the author (1725). Here *Comus*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Lycidas* are justly honoured—'all written', says Fenton, 'in such exquisite strain that though Milton had left no other monument of his genius behind him, his name had been immortal.' Fenton undertook to revise the punctuation of the poems; as a fact he made a few emendations of the text, and perhaps overlooked a few printers' errors; he has been censured for 'ignorance, want of taste, and silly officiousness'. He ought rather to be commended for the exercise of considerable discretion. Monk, the biographer of Bentley, supposes that it was Fenton's example which led that great scholar to exercise his critical ingenuity in castigating the received text of *Paradise Lost*. To repeat a story told at length by Monk and briefly by Sir Richard Jebb would be a superfluity. On one important point the biographers of Bentley differ. Bentley, as is well known, directs not a few of his most disdainful comments against an imagined editor and reviser of the blind poet's work, who saw *Paradise Lost* through the press, altered it at his pleasure, and adorned it with various purple patches of his own nonsense or pretentious, schoolboy learning. Monk suggests that, without seriously attempting to impose on the public, Bentley manufactured this man of straw, awkwardly enough, as a device to take off the odium incurred by his frequent condemnation or alteration in margin or footnotes of the words of the poet. Thus

it was not Milton whom Bentley assailed with scornful criticism, but the unknown editor, fraudulent, ignorant, devoid of judgement and of taste. Jebb, on the contrary, quoting from Bentley's Preface a passage which he supposes, on slender grounds, to negative this opinion, declares his conviction that the theory of the fraudulent editor was broached by Bentley in perfect good faith. Neither biographer notices the fact that from the first it had been conjectured that Bentley's man of straw was but a politic device. And, indeed, from an early date it was asserted that Bentley had himself admitted that he did not really credit the theory which he had set forth. Johnson in his *Life of Milton* gives his decision in magisterial fashion against Bentley and his theory: 'a supposition rash and groundless, if he thought it true; and vile and pernicious, if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.' These words were written some forty-five years after the publication of Bentley's *Paradise Lost.* But nearly thirty years earlier Johnson had rashly supplied Lauder with a preface and a postscript to his *Essay on Milton's use and imitation of the Moderns* (1750), and there Lauder asserted not only that Bentley's phantom or persona of an editor was 'a mere chimaera', but that the doctor himself well knew the thing to be impossible, which he 'scrupled not to acknowledge on proper occasions'. We can go still further back in search for the origin of Monk's hypothesis. Bentley's quarto was published by Tonson in 1732. Several numbers of *The Grub Street Journal*, with which Pope was closely connected, in the course of that year, are in part devoted to the defence of Milton, or rather to the more congenial task of belabouring the person of the aged, but still alert and combative, Master of Trinity. In the number for May 25, a vigorous opponent, signing himself 'A. Z.', comes forward with two letters written during the preceding month. In one of these the writer challenges the statement of Bentley that his notes were 'made *extempore*, and put to the press as soon as made'. A. Z. had learnt from a gentleman, who was ready, if called on, to attest the truth of what he stated with his name, that six years previously—in other words, shortly after the publication of Fenton's edition—Bentley's friend Ashenhurst declared at Bristol that the Doctor was then engaged in making notes on Milton; neither did he speak of it as a work just then taken in hand. Mitford in the Advertisement of his edition of *Milton's Poetical Works* (1834) informs us that he was in possession of the copy of Tonson's *Paradise Lost* used by Bentley for the purpose of recording his emendations and conjectures, and that the corrections published by Bentley, which number over eight hundred, are only a selection from a much larger mass remaining upon the

margin of that copy. It may be that Bentley worked during several years at a leisurely pace, and ultimately dictated the final form of his notes in haste, for the troubles in connexion with the Mastership of Trinity were urgent, and the later books of his *Paradise Lost* give indications of a hurry upon his spirits. In his second communication to *The Grub Street Journal* A. Z. considers the question of Bentley's sincerity and good faith. He lays aside the notion that Bentley was setting a trap to ensnare others into a belief in what he knew himself to be false; nor can he suppose that the Doctor doatingly takes his own dreams and fancies for realities. Discovering something like a parallel in Bentley's attribution to Dr. Colbatch, whom he wanted to pelt with mud, of a work known to be written by Middleton, A. Z. proceeds: 'Dr. Bentley knew it would be very impolitic to exercise this talent [his talent for abuse] against Milton; and therefore [he] conjures up this apparition of an editor (or by the help of a strong imagination persuades himself that there indeed was such an one) whom he may brand with scurrilous names at pleasure, give vent to his spleen, and raise the indignation of no man.'

No one who has examined Bentley's work with care can suppose that he was merely concerned to recover what Milton wrote. In some instances his conjectures go at least upon legitimate lines. They may be bad, or they may be needless, but in method they belong to the same species as legitimate corrections. For example, when in Book VII for Milton's

> And Earth be chang'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
> One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end,

Bentley proposes to read—

> And Earth be chain'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
> One Kingdom, join'd in Union without end,

we reject the proposed reading, but it is conceivable that *chained*, if dictated by the blind poet, might have been erroneously heard as *changed*, and again that *joined* might have been set down by the scribe as *Joy and*, so determining the printed text. But there are scores and hundreds of instances where Bentley's proposals can mean nothing except that he himself could write more correctly than Milton. The critic wholly reconstructs the original to suit his better judgement, omits a line or passage because he disapproves it, or adds a line because he imagines that such an addition is an advantage to the poem. He honoured the genius of Milton, but he believed that Milton was often deficient in clarity and precision of intellect, in the exact logic of poetic thought, and in that delicacy of

ear which refuses to tolerate a harshness or obstruction when difficulties in sound by a little skill can easily be smoothed away. Bentley's response to the suggestion of Queen Caroline should be a reformed *Paradise Lost*, not merely as Milton *did* write the poem in certain passages, but also as he *ought* to have written it in many others. Perhaps, as he proceeded with his task, the notion of a dishonest reviser and editor of the poem occurred to him, and that in the end he persuaded himself that the creature of his imagination might have existed. But his design is wider in scope than the correction of errors of the press, wider in scope even than the exhibition of his supposed editor's misdoings. The design is nothing less than to show how *Paradise Lost* must have been written had Milton the advantage of an eighteenth-century Aristarchus at his elbow. A comparison of Bentley's annotations with the replies in detail of Zachary Pearce is instructive in its disclosure of the ways in which the intellect—intellect of various degrees of fineness and flexibility—deals with work of the imagination. Pearce, like Bentley, is a critic of his own time, but his judgements are surer than Bentley's, partly because he has the grace of modesty, and partly because they do not always rest upon data furnished by the intellect alone.

Sir Richard Jebb pointed to one proposal of Bentley's as the sole emendation likely to be what Milton actually wrote, and at the same time certainly what he ought to have written. From the gash inflicted on Satan by the sword of Michael issues (Book VI, l. 332) a stream of 'nectarous humour'. 'An odious blunder!' cries Bentley, 'whether the printer's or the editor's hard to conjecture.' Read, therefore, as Milton gave it, 'ichorous humour'. In several instances, as where he would substitute *its* for *his*, the errors of Bentley arise from his ignorance of the history of the English language. It seems, if we may draw a conclusion from the examples given in the *New English Dictionary*, to have been left to Hobbes in 1676—a date after Milton's death—to use *ichor* for the first time in the sense of the ethereal juice which flows in the veins of the gods. When Diomedes wounds Venus in the fifth book of the *Iliad*, Chapman does not venture to anglicize the Greek *ichor*; immortal blood flows from the wound. The word *ichor* in Milton's time would seem to have been used only in a special physiological or pathological sense; it was, we may venture to think, a scientific, not a poetical, word. Neither *ichor* nor *ichorous* is anywhere to be found in Milton's *Poetical Works*. But *nectar* and the adjective *nectared* are words which he had used from an early date; the head of the Fair Infant who had died of a cough is a 'nectared head'; Lycidas laves his oozy locks with

nectar; in *Paradise Lost* brooks run nectar, vines yield nectar. To introduce into Milton's text a word which he never uses, and which perhaps was never used by an English writer until after the publication of *Paradise Lost* in the sense required, were indeed rash; and it is somewhat suggestive of the risks attending conjectural emendation to note that the adjective *nectarous*, which our great classical scholars Bentley and Jebb would displace, is a word so Miltonic that perhaps to him it may owe its origin. No earlier example is cited in the *New English Dictionary* than the 'nectarous draughts' of the fifth book of *Paradise Lost*.

The few instances in which Bentley established the true text of Milton, or suggested a highly probable reading, escaped the notice of Jebb among the eight hundred and odd proposals of that rash and presumptuous—yet intellectually acute—critic. It did not require eminent genius to notice that in B. vii, l. 451, 'Let th' Earth bring forth Fowle living in her kind' the printer had mistaken a long *s* for an *f* in his manuscript, and that Milton's word was *soul*, not *fowl*; but the error had been repeated in a series of editions and was not corrected until 1732. The handsome quarto has, therefore, certainly served Milton scholarship to the extent of a single letter. In the same seventh book, l. 321, Bentley's conjecture 'the swelling gourd' for the previous 'smelling gourd' has found some favour with editors and critics. It was approved by Upton in his *Critical Observations on Shakespeare*; Keightley introduced it into his text; Masson rejects it, but so cautious and judicious a scholar as Dr. W. Aldis Wright reads with Bentley (and the Capell MS.) 'the swelling gourd'. Bentley should also be given credit for reading *hither* in place of *thither* in B. xi, l. 344, though here he is only reverting unawares to the earlier text which had been corrupted in the edition of 1705. If all were collected from Bentley's notes that can be regarded as having value for the student of Milton only a few grains of wheat would lie in the hollow of the hand. And yet the spectacle of the great scholar confidently and joyously engaged in his labour of destruction which he supposed to be a labour of reformation, while compassed round with the infirmities of seventy years, and exposed to the assaults of his adversaries—his mind, as he expresses it, 'shaking off all outward uneasinesses, and involving itself, secure and pleased, in its own integrity and entertainment'—this spectacle is inspiriting, and reminds us of another combatant who bated not a jot of heart or hope, but still bore up and steered right onward.

As editor of *Paradise Lost* the old man became the object for many insults and mockeries. But his most accomplished and most effective

antagonist, Zachary Pearce, who followed him from line to line in a volume wholly devoted to a review of his edition, was hardly less courteous than he was patient. Jonathan Richardson, though Bentley was often in his mind as he brought to a conclusion his *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Paradise Lost*, abstains, I think, from mentioning Bentley's name. Richardson, when his volume appeared, was little short of Bentley's age when, two years previously, he had published his quarto. He had loved and honoured Milton from the days of his youth. His bent for portrait-painting had led him at an early age to become a pupil of Riley. He cared for poetry only less than he cared for painting, and above all other poets he esteemed Shakespeare, Dryden, and Cowley. In Riley's studio he happened to find a copy of the first edition of *Paradise Lost*, and, in his own phrase, 'was dazzled with it'. 'From that hour,' he writes, 'all the rest faded in my estimation, or vanished.' The fruit of his studies appeared about half a century later, and while what is best worth preserving in the notes has been incorporated in the editions of Newton and Todd, the Introduction, which consists of more than 180 pages, will always have an importance of its own, for Richardson gathered recollections of Milton from those who had personal acquaintance with him and recorded these with affectionate reverence. He associates on the title-page the name of his son, who was also a portrait-painter, with his own. The elder Richardson was not a classical scholar; his time of learning was employed, he says, in business; and then with an outbreak of paternal affection he adds: 'But after all I have the Greek and Latin tongues, I have them because a part of me possesses them, to whom I can recur at pleasure, just as I have a hand when I write or paint, feet to walk, and eyes to see. My son is my learning, as I am that to him which he has not; we make one man.' Richardson was perhaps the first to comment intelligently on Milton's peculiarities of spelling, *thir* for *their*, *mee* for *me*, when emphasis is required, and others; his care is evinced by the fact that he notices the existence of some differences of text in different copies of the first edition of *Paradise Lost*. He indulged a fancy of his own for beginning a sentence or a paragraph without the usual capital letter, when the first word was unemphatic, and sometimes he followed Milton's example in doubling the final *e*; thus on p. cxxxiv the unemphatic *we* and the emphatic *Wee* may both be found. The portrait of Milton prefixed as a frontispiece to Richardson's volume is worthy of notice; it is his rehandling of a crayon drawing, doubtfully ascribed to Faithorne, but not identical with the drawing from which the portrait in *The History of Britain* (1670) was engraved. This crayon, which passed into Tonson's possession,

was photographed in 1861 by permission of Mr. Baker, of Bayfordbury, Herts, for Sotheby's *Ramblings in Elucidation of the autograph of Milton.* It will be remembered that De Quincey considered that the frontispiece of Richardson's volume might serve as an admirable portrait of Wordsworth, an opinion emphatically negatived in my hearing by Wordsworth's friend, Robert Perceval Graves. Richardson endeavoured to add vigour to his original, and placed a laurel wreath upon the hair; 'all the world,' he says, 'has given it to Milton long since.' The crayon drawing then in Richardson's possession disputes with the lost original of the 1670 engraving the claim to have been the likeness which drew forth from Milton's daughter Dorothy the exclamation ''Tis my father! 'tis my dear father! I see him! 'tis the very man!' I may add that I possess two pencil drawings on vellum by Jonathan Richardson, of which one, dated 1734, the year in which he published his *Explanatory Notes*, is evidently from the crayon drawing; it has the advantage of hair uncrowned; the other, dated 1737, is a profile—possibly an attempt to imagine Milton's face as presented in the crayon from a wholly different point of view. As the work of a skilled and conscientious artist interested in his subject, the experiment is not without value.[1]

It was from Richardson's drawing that Vertue engraved the bust which appears in the first volume of Birch's edition of the *Historical, Political, and Miscellaneous Works of Milton*, published in two folio volumes in 1738. The arrangement of the works by Birch aims at being chronological. Birch includes *Concerning the reasons of the War with Spain*, which Toland had omitted, and he adds certain pages—the authenticity of which has been questioned—to the *History of Britain*; these pages, supposed by Birch to have been excised by the licencer, were perhaps omitted, as irrelevant, by Milton himself. His account of Milton's Life adds some particulars to what had previously been known; he examined the Cambridge manuscripts, and recorded many of their various readings; and his notes upon the growth of Milton's fame in England and on the Continent are fuller than any preceding treatment of the subject. He for the first time printed those remarkable lines beginning 'Fair mirror of foul times', alleged to have been written at Chalfont during the plague—lines which, if not by Milton, have caught the movement of his verse in a remarkable degree. Birch's objection to their authenticity—that the choice of war, pestilence, or famine is said to have been offered to

[1] Dr. G. C. Williamson informs me that one of these is the original drawing for the engraving No. 117, and the other that for No. 190 of his large paper catalogue of Portraits, &c., of Milton, 1908.

David in connexion with his 'sin for the fair Hittite' instead of with his numbering of the army—is somewhat lightly set aside by Masson in his *Life of Milton*; but there is force in the objection, for in *Paradise Regained* (B. III. l. 410) the poet shows that he was not forgetful of this passage of the Old Testament.

Birch's bulky folios were not of a nature to add much to the popularity of Milton. But a Miltonic enthusiasm was in the air. In the preceding year Mr. Auditor Benson erected a monument to Milton in Westminster Abbey; he produced a Milton medal, employed Rysbrack to make two busts, and gave £1,000 to William Dobson for a translation of *Paradise Lost* into Latin verse. Two years after the publication of Birch's Prose Works appeared (1740) the quarto volume *New Memoirs of the Life and Poetical Works of Mr. John Milton*, by Francis Peck, described by Masson as a 'silly medley of odds and ends', a volume adorned with a finely engraved pseudo-portrait, and containing the curious pseudo-Miltonic translation of Buchanan's *Baptistes*, yet, notwithstanding its silliness, not without some value for those who will take the pains to turn over its pages. *Baptistes*, laughed at by Warburton, was accepted as genuine by William Lauder. The anonymous essay on *Milton's Imitation of the Ancients* followed in 1741; in the same year was published *A verbal Index to Paradise Lost*, and Paterson's *Complete Commentary* on that poem was issued in 1744. As yet Milton's early poems had received comparatively little attention; they waited in a half obscurity to obtain due recognition from the Romantic revival. But in the year of Birch's folios, 1738, the way was prepared for a popular reception of this part of Milton's work by the presentation on the Drury Lane stage of Dr. Dalton's version of *Comus*, with added characters, added speeches, and songs set to the charming music of Dr. Arne. It seems not improbable that the success of Arne's music led Handel two years later to set to music the arrangement by Charles Jennens of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Handel's *Samson*—composed at an earlier date—was performed in 1743. Dalton's *Comus* should be judged with reference to the purpose at which it aimed; the *Mask*, as written by Milton, might please an audience fit, though few; it could not be a popular success. But a popular success *Comus* was, and the public reputation of Milton owes something to the acting of Quin and, at a later date, of Henderson, to the voice of Kitty Clive, and afterwards to that of Ann Catley. Though some of the songs are trivial, and some are modish, Dalton's work is not without a certain skill and ingenuity. A second Attendant Spirit supports the Lady as the first guides and encourages the brothers; the crew of the enchanter bustles

with male and female singers. Comus opens the third act with lines from *L'Allegro* invoking Euphrosyne, and presently the goddess fair and free, or rather a nymph who represents her, enters singing of

> Pulses beating, bosoms burning,
> Bosoms with warm wishes panting,
> Words to speak those wishes wanting,

and more in the like amorous strain. A pastoral nymph, with a melancholy and despondent air, tells in a musical ballad, how she seeks in vain for Damon. And the spectators are presently gratified with a slow dance 'expressive of the passions of love'. Queen Caroline had befriended Milton's daughter; Dr. Johnson befriended his granddaughter by contributing a Prologue to *Comus*, spoken by Garrick, when in 1750 it was acted for her benefit at Drury Lane:—

> What though she shine with no Miltonian fire,
> No fav'ring Muse her morning dreams inspire;
> Yet softer claims the melting heart engage,
> Her youth laborious, and her blameless age;
> Hers the mild merits of domestic life,
> The patient sufferer and the faithful wife.

Quin's rendering of the part of Comus at the earlier presentation of the play was distinguished by something that seemed to the spectators like superhuman dignity and grace. 'With what a superior greatness,' cries a critic, 'does he introduce himself to us by his manner of delivering the glorious lines that open his part:—

> The star that bids the shepherd fold,
> Now the top of heaven doth hold.'

He courted the lady as a superior, as a deity condescending to a mortal. The enthusiastic critic goes on to affirm that 'if anything claims the title of being the greatest sentence, and most nobly pronounced of any on the English theatre, it is that threat of Comus to the lady, where, on her offering to get up to leave him, he tells her,

> Nay, lady, sit—if I but wave this wand
> Your nerves are all bound up in alabaster,
> And you a statue; or as Daphne was,
> Root-bound, who fled Apollo.'

The *Mask*, as Milton named it, and as it is usually named previous to 1738, came perhaps to be commonly known as *Comus* after its presentation with that title on the stage. In 1773 it was abridged by the elder Colman, and in this form was presented as an after-piece.

The half-century with which the notes in this paper are concerned

closed with the controversy aroused by William Lauder's impudent *Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns*, while Newton's great edition of the Poetical Works (1749–52) lies exactly on this side and on that of the year 1751, and sums up the labours of more than fifty years of study. The story of Lauder, his real services to Milton scholarship, his audacious forgeries, his exposure and his confession, is too long to be told here.

MILTON AS SCHOOLBOY AND SCHOOLMASTER

By A. F. LEACH

Read December 10, 1908

MILTON AS SCHOOLBOY AND SCHOOLMASTER

By A. F. LEACH

Read December 10, 1908

Probably in none of our famous men, certainly in none among our great poets, is it easier to see and to show that the child was father of the man than in Milton. Instead of being, as the vulgar usually imagine of a poet, a kind of Puck, or, at the best, an Ariel, wafted on the wings of wantonness hither and thither in irresponsible vagaries, Milton passed all but one and a half of his sixty-six years in the close circle of staid and sober home life. His alarms and excursions were those of the mind out of the body. It is therefore not surprising that his school-days had a permanent impression on Milton's views and works.

I. Milton as Schoolboy.

Milton's school was St. Paul's School, the 'Free Scole of Poules', as Colet called it, the Grammar School of the cathedral church of St. Paul's, to give it its older and more exact title. This was the obvious school for a London citizen's son living in Bread Street, being then not in the distant suburb of Hammersmith, but at the east end of St. Paul's Churchyard, in the very centre of civic life, not one hundred yards from his home. Moreover, the fact that it was a Free School, free of tuition fees for all its one hundred and fifty-three day-scholars, strictly limited by the number of the seats, would not have been without its attraction to a thrifty scrivener. All we certainly know of Milton's school life is when it had come to an end. This we only know from the record of the admission at Christ's College, Cambridge, Feb. 12, 1624–5, of John Milton of London, son of John, at school under Mr. Gill, high master of St. Paul's, or, as it stands in the affected Latin of the day, in the original, 'instituted in the elements of letters under Master Gill, prefect of the Pauline gymnasium,' using a term for school now fortunately confined to Germany.

It must be confessed that almost everything else to do with Milton's school-days depends not on documentary evidence, not even on 'oral tradition', but on inference and conjecture. But where would biographers and commentators be if the *Lives of the Poets* was all plain sailing on the sea of fact? No register of admissions or school lists of St. Paul's School exist before 1748. So at least it is said, though, as the records of the Mercers' Company, who were for three and a half centuries the sole governors of the school, and are still a chief part of its governing body, have never been opened to research, it is by no means certain that no admission lists exist. The non-existence of a register is a breach of duty, for an admission book was contemplated by the statutes of 1518, it being provided that: 'a chylde at the first admission onys for ever shall pay 4*d.* for writynge of his name. This mony . . . shall the pore scoler have that swepith the Scole and kepith the Scole cleane.' Still no list is forthcoming.

Anthony Wood (*Fasti* 262), who cites a 'friend who was well acquainted with, and had from him [Milton] and from his relations after his death most of this account', sends him to Cambridge at the age of fifteen, and speaks of his staying up late at night at College 'as at school for three years before'. From this it was computed that Milton entered St. Paul's in 1622, or the end of 1621. As, however, Milton's lifelong friendship with Charles Diodati was a school friendship, and Diodati went to Oxford in Feb. 1621–2, Professor Masson rightly infers that we must allow more than a possible term for the friendship to ripen. He therefore enters him at St. Paul's in 1620. As on entering Cambridge in 1624 Milton was not fifteen but sixteen and a quarter years old, this gives him a school life not of three years but of four. But boys went to public schools much earlier then than now. It is only in the last fifty years that the growth of preparatory schools and competition for scholarships has postponed the age, first to twelve and now to thirteen. In Milton's day, and for many years after, seven was the normal age for boys to go to school, especially to a day-school, as St. Paul's was. His contemporary Charles Hoole, in his *New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School*, written in 1637, and practised for fourteen years, first at Rotherham and then in London, sets out a seven years' course, beginning at seven years old as the normal age.

As Milton was already astonishing the household with his Latin verses at the age of eleven, i. e. in 1618, and verses were not done till the 4th form, which he would in the usual course reach in three years, we may send him to school more safely in 1615. Even if we take Jansen's poetic portrait of Milton at the age of ten as a

charming apple-cheeked boy with brown eyes as marking the beginning of his life in the world of school, he would have gone there in 1618. Milton's own account of his early learning certainly points to an earlier date than 1620. For while he records[1] how at twelve years old he began to sit up to midnight to do his lessons, he implies that he had been to school before he began that vicious practice.

> My father destined me while yet a little boy for the study of humane letters, which I seized with such eagerness that from the twelfth year of my age I scarcely ever went from my lessons to bed before midnight; which, indeed, was the first cause of injury to my eyes, to whose natural weakness there were also added frequent headaches. All which not retarding my impetuosity in learning, he caused me to be daily instructed both at the grammar school and under other masters at home; and then, when I had acquired various tongues and also some not insignificant taste for the sweetness of philosophy, he sent me to Cambridge.

On a boy of Milton's temperament the associations of the school must have had no small influence. St. Paul's School, though in its building it was only 'the newe scole of Poules', as Colet dubbed it almost a century before, was, as an institution, at least 500 years, and probably 800 years, older. For it was the old Cathedral Grammar School, part of the foundation of the Cathedral Church.

There is still extant among the archives of St. Paul's the actual deed in which, about 1112, Bishop Richard Belmeis records, not, as stated by Bishop Stubbs, the foundation of the school, but the confirmation to a new master, 'Hugh the schoolmaster (*magistro scolarum*) *ex officio* as master, and his successors in that dignity, the place of Master Durand [the late master] in the angle of the tower where Dean William placed him by my order.' The tower was the bell-tower of the Cathedral, which, as usual in early days, stood detached from the church, and was at the east end of the churchyard. Here the school stood till Colet built a new schoolhouse a few yards to the north, in 1512, on the site of the later building, which still bears the inscription that it is St. Paul's school. Still extant also is the actual appointment by the same bishop, about 1120, of the next master, granting to 'Canon Henry, foster son of master Hugh, St. Paul's school as honourably as the church ever held it at its best and most honourable estate' with an endowment of lands and tithes at Fulham, Ealing, and Madeley. Still more interesting is a third document, also still to be seen, of the year 1137 or 1138, by which Bishop Henry of Blois, King Stephen's brother, Bishop of Winchester, holding the bishopric of London during a vacancy in the See, directed

[1] Milton, *Defensio Secunda* (*Works*, vi. 286).

the chapter of St. Paul's and the Archdeacon of London to 'pronounce sentence of excommunication against those who without the leave of Schoolmaster Henry presume to teach, in the whole city of London, except those who teach the schools of St. Mary le Bow and St. Martin le Grand.' So important in those days did the highest ecclesiastical authorities esteem the schools, that here, as elsewhere, the thunders of the Church were invoked to protect the authorized schoolmasters' monopoly and put down unlicensed infringers of it. No overlapping was allowed in those days. The reason for the exemption of St. Mary le Bow was that it was a 'peculiar' of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the seat of his principal ecclesiastical court, then as now called the Court of Arches, and so was extra diocesan to London; while St. Martin le Grand was a collegiate church with a Dean and Canons almost as ancient and privileged as St. Paul's itself, and the deanery itself was or was about to be held by Bishop Henry of Blois himself.

St. Paul's school, called, *par excellence*, the school of the city (*scole urbis*), is recorded by Fitzstephen, who had himself been Dean of the Arches and afterwards a judge of the Supreme Court, to have been attended in his youth, about 1118, by St. Thomas the Martyr, better known as Thomas à Becket, before he went to the nascent University of Paris. Becket's biographer records not only the boys' studies, but their sports. How on feast-days, saints' days, they met in the churches and held disputations. The schools then, when Oxford University was just being born, performed in part the office of universities.

> The elder scholars spoke argumentatively, others by way of question and answer. These roll out enthymemes, those use the form of perfect syllogisms. Some dispute merely for show as they do at collections, others for truth. The rhetoricians . . . observe the precepts of their art and omit nothing belonging to it. The boys of the three schools hold contests in verse or prose with each other on the principles of grammar or the rules of preterites and supines. Others in epigrams, rhymes and metres use the old street gags, with Fescennine licence scourging their schoolfellows . . . without mentioning names they hurl abusive epithets at them, with Socratic salt girding at their failings or perhaps those of their elders, and in bold dithyrambics biting them with the sharp tooth of Theon. The audience ready to laugh with wrinkled noses redouble their shrill guffaws.

This striking passage and its termination, which is a quotation from Persius, are of themselves sufficient to refute the absurd notion which has become current that the old grammar schools taught boys nothing but how to stumble through the Psalms with a few Gregorian chants.

St. Paul's School still retained its pre-eminence in the days of Chaucer, who, we can hardly doubt, was one of its scholars. In 1394 a Bill in Parliament to set up other schools was rejected. The first known addition to the schools of London was in 1420, when we find a grammar schoolmaster at St. Michael's, Cornhill, receiving a royal ward as pupil. In 1442 St. Anthony's School was established in St. Anthony's Hospital in Threadneedle Street, under royal auspices with exhibitions to Oriel College, its head master receiving the same salary and emoluments as the head master of Eton, founded two years before. In Stow's boyhood, this school, at which he seems to have been himself, numbered over 200 boys, and in the yearly disputations at St. Bartholomew's, which still continued as in Becket's day, used to eclipse its Pauline rival. It was this old school of St. Paul's with all its traditions and 'its rights, privileges, and appurtenances whatsoever', and the old school building with four shops under it, which Dean Colet, under the special authority of Pope, bishop, dean, and chapter, and the King, bought from himself and his fellow-canons in 1510, and transferred to his new school, the chapter specially reserving to the high master of the new school, whether he was priest or layman, a stall in the choir of the cathedral church, the same as the old one enjoyed, so long as he appeared in a decent surplice. In fact, what Colet did for St. Paul's School was, not to found a new school, but to make a new scheme for an old one of immemorial antiquity, giving it a new governing body, the Mercers' Company, laymen, instead of himself and his chapter, a large additional endowment, and a fine new building. The school was still reckoned as an appendage of the church. The boys still walked in the processions of the Canons, while such processions still prevailed, and still attended the cathedral church on high days and holidays. Much of this high tradition and ancient history must have been known to Milton, as part of it is told, though with some grievous blunders, in Stow's *Survey of London*, which we may be sure was to be found in the book-loving household in Bread Street, and often quoted in St. Paul's School. It is certain that the *genius loci* had its effect on his mind. For it was not at Cambridge or at Horton parish church, but as a boy of St. Paul's School, attending St. Paul's Cathedral, that he learned to

> love the high embowèd roof,
> With antique pillars massy proof,
> And storied windows richly dight,
> Casting a dim religious light:
> There let the pealing organ blow
> To the full-voiced choir below

> In service high and anthems clear,
> As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
> Dissolve me into ecstasies
> And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

The small chamber of Christ's College Chapel, even Great St. Mary's itself, certainly could not have given the experience which drew from this young Puritan a loftier, a more effective, and more exact picture of an ancient church, a solemn service, and sweet music than any Laudian mumbler of ceremonies ever dreamt of.

Further, when Milton uttered the wish

> But let my due feet never fail
> To walk the studious cloisters pale,

he was probably reproducing the actual experience of his youth. For the cloisters of St. Paul's were almost contiguous to the school; and the epithet 'studious' suggests that at St. Paul's then, as at Winchester till within almost living memory, during the hot days of summer, the boys deserted the close-packed school for the cool and spacious cloisters, to do, or at least prepare, their lessons.

While the *genius loci* of the old school thus bestowed on Milton the admiration for antiquity and august architecture which gave colour to his day-dreams and splendour to his poems, the *genius hominis* under which he fell gave a very different direction to his waking views of the world and his active life. The masters under whom Milton came were the high master, Alexander Gill, the sub or sur master William Sound, and the under-usher, first Oliver Smythe and then Alexander Gill the younger. Of William Sound, though Milton must have been under him at first, we hear no sound, nor of Oliver Smythe. But the two Gills were important elements in the formation of Milton the poet and publicist. Alexander Gill the elder was in the middle of his tenure of office when Milton went to school, having been appointed from Norwich Grammar School in 1608, and continuing in the mastership till his death in 1635. He had, while at Norwich, published a tract on the Trinity.

In 1619, while Milton was at St. Paul's, he published his *Logonomia Anglica*, which had the same object as the *Fonetik Nuz*, the reform of English spelling on phonetic lines. It was also an English grammar, which, though written in Latin, was illustrated with extracts from English poets, notably Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, 'our Lucan, Samuel Daniel', 'our Juvenal, George Withers'. Its literary history was not very sound when it charged Geoffrey Chaucer, 'of unlucky omen,' with having 'made his poetry famous by the use of French and Latin words', oblivious of the fact that French was the vernacular of the

English upper classes till the French wars of Edward III made it unpatriotic, and that even in schools Latin was translated not into English but into French till about 1380. However, as Professor Masson has remarked, 'If Gill was only half as interesting in his schoolroom as in his book, he must have been an effective and even delightful teacher.' Milton may well have owed to him his early appreciation of English poetry, which made him at the age of nineteen salute it in a college exercise:

> Hail native language that by sinews weak
> Didst move my first endeavouring tongue to speak.

It is remarkable that even in that early and sportive effort Milton declares his 'preference for themes sublime':

> Yet I had rather, if I were to choose,
> Thy service in some graver subject use,
> Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
> Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound:
> Such where the deep transported mind may soar,
> Above the wheeling poles, and at heaven's door
> Look in.

The versions in verse of Psalms cxiv and cxxxvi, 'done by the author at fifteen years old,' were probably for some school exercise. Prosaic as they are, they are studded with epithets of real poetic power far beyond those usually found in attempts at poetic versions of the Psalms, which generally make us agree with Browning's judgement on Clement Marot, that 'his faculties were in no small mist when he versified David the Psalmist'. These epithets have been traced to Spenser, Chaucer, Drummond, and so forth, and especially to Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas. But though not original, they show that Milton, while, as a scholar is brought up to do, picking up the crumbs from the feast of languages which he attended, was gifted with exceptional appreciation of what were the most toothsome crumbs.

Young Gill had a more certain and direct connexion with Milton. An old Pauline himself, under his father, he went with an exhibition to Trinity College, Oxford, and thence to be one of the first scholars of the newly-founded Wadham College. It is recorded in the margin of a scurrilous poem against him in his later years that when a scholar at Wadham, called on to begin the chant of a psalm, he 'flung out of the chapel, saying *Quicumque vult*, let him begin it'. A Latin threnody of his on the death of Prince Henry, the eldest son of James I, had perhaps attracted some attention at Oxford in his freshman's year, as it was subsequently (1632) included in a published volume of his Latin poems, entitled 'πάρεργα sive Poetici Conatus'.

The collection comprised a similar Greek poem on the death of Queen Anne in 1618. Gill took his M.A. degree in 1619, and two years after was appointed by his father under-usher at St. Paul's. In the interim perhaps he was a master at Farnaby's private school, the first perhaps of authorized private schools in London, and certainly the most famous. On New Year's Day, 1620–1, Gill sent him a poetical epistle in Latin with a skin of canary wine. When Gill junior came to St. Paul's, Milton must have been somewhere at the top of the school, and evidently struck up a great friendship with him. For two of his letters to Gill from Cambridge have been preserved: one on May 20, 1628, thanking him in rather ecstatic terms for some Latin verses on a victory of Prince Henry of Nassau, Stadtholder of Holland. The other was on July 2, 1628, sending Gill some verses written by himself for the commencement at Cambridge, 'knowing you', he says, 'to be a very severe judge in poetical matters and a very candid judge of my productions'. In one letter, which shows close personal and literary intimacy, he says, 'as often as I recall your almost constant conversations with me (which even in this Athens I miss) I straightway think, and not without grief, of how much benefit my absence from you has deprived me, as I have never left your company without a clear increase and ἐπίδοσις of literary knowledge, just as if I had been to some emporium of learning'.

Now young Gill was a very strong Protestant and Puritan, and therefore strongly against the prevalent political system and politicians of the day, the Duke of Buckingham, and under him Laud. One of his Latin poems, written the year after Milton went up to Cambridge, was a poem of rejoicing, *In ruinam camerae papisticae Londini*, on the fall of a Popish chapel in Black Friars, which killed nearly 100 people, and as it happened, according to the Roman reckoning, new style, on November 5, was hailed as God's judgement for Gunpowder Plot. Though 'our benignant prince lets you meet for your idolatrous worship, God himself takes his cause in hand' is the effect of it. When Milton was writing his letters to Gill in 1628, in the first of which he hopes that 'our own affairs turning out more fortunate England itself will demand your congratulatory muses', Parliament was in the throes of its first great struggle with the king, which ended in the Petition of Right. On August 23, Buckingham was murdered by Felton. On Sept. 5 there must have been great excitement at St. Paul's School, when Gill was fetched out of it by two royal pursuivants and taken before Laud, questioned and committed prisoner to the Gate House, 'so close that neither father, mother, nor friend can speak to him.' All this, because on a visit to Oxford, Gill had, in

private talks in the buttery, and at beer-drinking in the cellar of Trinity College, made, as Laud expressed it, 'speeches so foul against religion, allegiance, your Majesty's person, and my dear lord by execrable hands laid in the dust' that he had examined him in private. Gill had been informed against by William Chillingworth, then a newly elected Fellow of Trinity, who shortly after became a Jesuit, but returned to be rewarded with a canonry. It is odd that Masson, who had gone to the State Papers himself, was in any doubt about Chillingworth's share in what the late Bishop of London called (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*) a business as discreditable to Laud as to Chillingworth. He had, it is now clear from the State Papers, himself been an *agent provocateur*. Gill's first speech against Charles I had merely consisted of this: 'We have a fine wise king. He has wit enough to be a shopkeeper to ask "What do you lack?" and that is all.' The real offence was that being asked by Chillingworth what he thought of James I, he answered that 'the duke and he were together, and if there were a hell and a devil, surely the devil was there'. Then, as a witness said, 'in a madbrain railing humour' he began a health to Felton, which most of the company drank with him, as most sound Protestants in the country would have done. At Chillingworth's instigation the rooms of one of Gill's correspondents were searched for 'incriminating' documents. Papers two years old were found. But nothing worse appeared than the following doggerel, which reflected more credit on Gill's political than on his poetical views. The point of it is that the king had been deprived of the use of his senses by Buckingham, and may be called

A PRAYER FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE KING'S SENSES.

And now, just God, I humbly pray
That thou wilt take that slime away
That keeps my sovereign's *eyes* from viewing
The things that will be our undoing.
Then let him *hear*, good God, the sounds
As well of them as of his hounds.
Give him a *taste* and timely too
Of what his subjects undergo.
Give him a *feeling* of their woes,
And then no doubt his royal nose
Will quickly *smell* those rascals' savours
Whose blacky deeds eclipse his favours.
Though bound and scourged for their offences
Heaven bless my king and all his senses.

For this Gill was haled before the Star Chamber, ordered to be degraded from the ministry and from his degree (he was a B.D.), to be fined £2,000, and lose one ear at London and the other at Oxford.

Through the intercession of Gill the father, the loss of the ears, inflicted on Prynne and Burton for even less offences a few years later, with the fine, were remitted. But he was turned out of his mastership, and it is said degraded. If so, as he afterwards appears as D.D., he must afterwards have been restored. The loss of office was no great one to the family, as not Amurath an Amurath succeeded, but Harry Harry, George Gill, his brother, coming in his place as under-usher.

Noscitur a sociis. In correspondence on this incident, Diodati, Milton's school contemporary, also of Trinity College, who was, fortunately for himself, away at the time, guesses that Chillingworth was the informer, showing that he sympathized with Gill. We may therefore conclude that Milton had in his schooldays imbibed from Gill and shared with Diodati the political views, the expression of which brought him by turns fame and fortune and infamy and misfortune, but from which he never swerved. In this he was unlike Gill, who in 1632 included in his *πάρεργα* some abject Latin verses in honour of Laud. But Milton had independent means, and poor Gill was dependent on his profession for his livelihood, and Laud, as Ordinary of London, could have stopped him in its exercise. By an odd turn of Fortune's wheel, it became one of the articles in the impeachment of Laud that he had unconstitutionally interfered on behalf of Gill, who succeeded his father as high master of St. Paul's School, with the Mercers' Company, when they gave him notice to quit. Laud then laid down that, though the Company, as Governors, had been given absolute power of dismissal, they could only exercise it with the consent of the Ordinary. Sufficient evidence is not forthcoming as to the rights and wrongs of the dismissal. The cause ostensibly laid by the Mercers was excessive flogging, and some ribald poems on Gill's flogging were published during the Commonwealth. But Gill alleged that it was because he claimed from the Company, for the school, the augmented revenues of Colet's endowment, which the Company put into their own pockets. As the Mercers in 1640 agreed to pay Gill £50 down, and a pension of £25 a year for life, as we know that as late as 1720 they had only increased the salary to double that prescribed by Colet nearly 200 years before, and as late as 1866 claimed the school property as their own, there is some reason to think that the flogging was only an excuse for getting rid of a somewhat violent reformer, who had the audacity to apply his principles to the school and to the City Company, who were its trustees.

While we can hardly doubt that young Gill gave a bias to Milton's politics which they never lost, and in the expression of which in

his prose works he became the greatest English publicist of his day, it is perhaps rather to the books used at St. Paul's that we can trace the bent shown alike in his earliest and latest poetical works to scriptural subjects and the treatment of them. Colet, in setting down 'what shalbe taught of the maisters and lernyd of the scolers', began very wisely by saying 'it passyth my wit to devyse and determyn in particular'. 'In generall' he laid down that they were to be 'taught allway in good litterature both latyn and greke, and goode auctors such as have the veray Romayne eliquence joyned with wysdome, . . specially Cristyn auctours that wrote theyre wysdome with clene and chast laten other in verse or prose'. Then he proceeded to specify first his own catechizon or catechism and Latin accidence in English, then two elementary Latin books of Erasmus.

And thenne other auctours Christian as Lactantius, Prudentius and Proba and Sedulius and Juuencus and Baptista Mantuanus, and suche other as shalbe thoughte convenyent and moste to purpose unto the true laten speech, all barbary, all corrupcion, all laten adulterate which ignorant blind folks brought into this worlde and with the same hath distayned and poysoned the old laten speech and the very Romayne tong which in the tyme of Tully and Sallust and Virgill and Terence were usid, whiche also Seint Jerome and Seint Ambrose and Seint Austen and many holy doctors lernyd in theyr tymes. I say that ffylthynesse and all such abusyon which the later blynde worlde brought in, which more ratheyr may be callid blotterature thenne litterature, I utterly abbanysh and exclude oute of this Scole, and charge the Maisters that they teche all way that is the best, and instruct the chyldren in greke and redyng laten, in redyng unto them suych auctours that hathe with wisdome joyned the pure chaste eloquence.

In fact Colet's reform took the shape now so much in vogue, which consists in going back on our fathers and grandfathers to our great-great and triple-great grandfathers. To the modern classical scholar it is a curious reflection on the critical standard of Colet's day that he should thus place the writers not of the silver, or even of the bronze age, but of the leaden age of Latin literature, on a par with those of the golden or Augustan age. It is an interesting question whether Colet knew that in prescribing such authors he was putting back the school curriculum of London in the sixteenth century to that of York in the eighth century, and replacing on the shelves of St. Paul's School library the books which Alcuin in a celebrated poem describes as the principal treasures of the York library in 780. Yet this is what, in the reaction against the sophistical, dialectical, hair-splitting treatises of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, he was doing. We need not discuss here whether Lilly's and Erasmus' grammar was an advance on previous grammars. It was fated in its turn to be spoken of with quite as much reprobation for its 'blottera-

ture' as its predecessors. Milton himself, as will be seen, who had clearly suffered under the tyranny of grammar as taught at St. Paul's, much as Colet had no doubt suffered under the tyranny of logic as taught where he was at school, whether St. Anthony's or St. Paul's itself, framed a new book in the vain attempt to supersede it. In the long run it may be questioned whether the reign of grammar is not a more hopeless and soul-slaying tyranny than that of dialectic. For the minutiae of verbal criticism in a dead language and the learning by heart of elaborate rules which are of absolutely no use except for the dead language itself, are even worse than the definitions for the sake of defining, and the rules of arguing for the sake of argument, which, over-elaborate as they were, were at least applicable to all forms of discussion on all subjects whatever.

But in education almost any change is for the good, as the one fatal thing is hide-bound uniformity and conformity. No doubt in Colet's day the resurrection of these early Christian authors was an improvement on the 'ineffable' and the 'irrefragable' and the other 'able' doctors of the schools. Moreover, these authors had been an immense advance on the pagan authors of their own day of slowly dying paganism, the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ, when Christianity was the one progressive force. Even the Sermon on the Mount in hexameters was at least a fresher element in literature than the stale old stories of Bacchus and Ariadne or the invocation of the muses. Which of the authors mentioned by Colet, or how much of them, were actually read in St. Paul's School we do not know. In default of any ransacking of the Mercers' records, nothing like a curriculum of St. Paul's is forthcoming before the eighteenth century. Professor Masson avoids the subject, laying down (*Life*, i. 65) positively, 'Instead of peddling over Sedulius and other such small practitioners of later or middle-aged Latinity, recommended as proper class-books by Colet, the scholars of St. Paul's as of other contemporary schools, were now led through very much the same list of Roman prose-writers and poets as are still honoured in our academies.' No authority is cited for this dictum. That the classical authors were studied and that Greek especially had made great strides in the schools since the days of Colet, or rather since the accession of Elizabeth, for there was little taught before that, cannot be disputed. But seeing the scrupulous and almost superstitious reverence paid to the foundation statutes of the schools by those who administered them, with a Court of Chancery and its 'Commissions of Charitable Uses' ever ready to see them enforced, it is highly improbable that the only specific injunctions of the founder

of the 'newe scole of Poules' should have been wholly disregarded and put aside within a century of their issue. In spite of Nowell's catechism, Colet's 'catechizon' was still used, the Roman parts only, such as that on the Seven Sacraments, being dropped. The Latin prayers, omitting those to the Virgin, but including one to the Boy Jesus, were still said even in Strype's time, who was at the school during the Commonwealth. It is, therefore, incredible that the prescribed authors should have been ignored in the days when Laud was living.

Instead of searching among Italian or Dutch authors, whom Milton may or may not have known, and who at all events came to him as moderns and inferiors, the inspiration which impelled him to the Hymns of the Nativity and the Passion while he was a boy, and to *Paradise Lost* alike in his youth, his manhood, and his old age, we can find it in those authors whom he studied in his most impressionable years, who came to him with all the halo of antiquity and the hallowed tradition of the 'pious founder' and the school. Let us take these authors in detail.

The first, Lactantius, is at first sight no food for babes. But seeing that boys were set to read Cicero *De Natura Deorum* at Winchester at the age of fifteen, in 1865, there seems no reason why, when boys had only recently ceased to be inducted into the mysteries of the predicaments and predicables at that age, they should not have read Lactantius' *Institutes* at St. Paul's in 1620. It is a most able work, full of close argument and cogent reasoning, and the way in which Cicero himself is dissected on the subject of the relation of God as creator to matter, would do credit to a Paley or a Huxley. In book ii, 'On the origin of sin', *De origine erroris*, Lactantius takes a view of the position of Christ as Son of God and his part in creation, which, it has been pointed out (*Dict. Christ. Biog.*), is not far short of Arian, and is precisely the view taken by Milton in *Paradise Lost*, book v. Milton was, as is known from a posthumous publication, an Arian, and he may have unconsciously imbibed this view from Lactantius himself, a result which perhaps Colet hardly contemplated. Matters of high theology, 'every slip in which entails Twenty-nine distinct damnations, one certain if another fails,' cannot be discussed here. But there is a singular resemblance between Lactantius' observations in the same book on the folly of seeking to know too much about how the creation was done, and a passage in Milton, which may be quoted in safety.[1]

[1] Lact. *Inst.* ii. 9 'Quomodo autem ille fecerit ne mente quidem videtur, quia, ut Hermes Trismegistus ait, "Sciat igitur quam inepte faciat qui res innarrabiles quaerit. Hoc est enim modum conditionis suae transgredi, quousque homini liceat accedere."'

Lactantius says, 'But how he did it cannot even be conceived, for, as Hermes Trismegistus says, "Let him who asks things beyond the power of narration know how foolishly he acts. For this is to pass the bounds of his nature and the limits which man can reach."' We may well ask whether it was not from Lactantius that Milton first heard of the 'thrice great Hermes' whom he wished to call up in *Il Penseroso*. Certainly Raphael's speech to Adam (*Par. Lost*, vii. 118) is indebted to Lactantius:

> Such commission from above
> I have receiv'd, to answer thy desire
> Of knowledge within bounds; beyond, abstain
> To ask; nor let thine own inventions hope
> Things not reveal'd, which th' invisible King,
> Only omniscient, hath suppress'd in night,
> To none communicable in earth or heaven.

As to Proba, this good lady, whose identity is somewhat shadowy, but is conjecturally Proba Valeria Fultonia, wife of Adulf, a proconsul at the end of the fourth century, was guilty of a work called *Centones Virgiliani*. One can but wonder alike at the good taste and good sense of Colet in recommending for his scholars a poem entirely composed of lines of Virgil wrested from their context and re-arranged as a patchwork Life of Christ. He perhaps thought that this curious *tour de force* gave profane Virgil, whom many wished to drive from the schools, a sacred form, and so preserved him. Milton seems to owe the exordium to *Paradise Lost* to the *Invocatio Dei* which begins this strange medley. If not, it is a singular coincidence that, while Proba quotes in her Invocation

> *Nec libet Aonio de vertice ducere Musas,*

Milton should in his Invocation speak of

> my adventurous song
> That with no middle flight intends to soar
> Above the Aonian mount.

Caelius Sedulius was a fifth-century schoolmaster of a rhetoric school, which, in Roman times, rather than the grammar school corresponded to the upper forms of our grammar schools. He may have specially commended himself to Colet by his description of Christ as the Boy Doctor among the doctors of the Temple; an incident commemorated by the statue of the Boy Jesus in the school, with above it, suggested by Erasmus, a picture of God the Father and the label 'Hear ye Him'. Sedulius' Easter Song (*Carmen Paschale*) begins with some fine lines in

assertion of the right of the Christian poet to sing the saving truths of Christ instead of the vicious fictions of the heathen.[1] Though the poem as a whole is not up to this sample, it was immensely popular. Sixteen MSS. ranging in date from the seventh to the sixteenth century are known, and forty editions in print. But it is doubtful how far Sedulius was read at St. Paul's, his Paschal feast savouring too much of the mass.

Juvencus, who is also said to have been a rhetoric schoolmaster, turned the Gospels into Virgilian hexameters in his *Historia Evangelica*. The proem to it, comparing Matthew to a law-giver, Mark to an eagle, Luke to a bull, and John to a lion, is primarily responsible for the representation of the Evangelists under those figures; though later authors and artists transmuted the emblems of Mark and John. But except for the exordium Juvencus' style is bad and bathos is not seldom reached. It may be doubted whether this book, if read at St. Paul's at all, contributed anything to Milton.

No such doubt can be felt of their contemporary, Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, the Christian Pindar, as he has been called, to whom Milton's debt is great and plain. A Roman rhetorician and lawyer, Prudentius' poems were published in 409. He is known to have been used as a school-book not only by Alcuin in the eighth but by Bruno in the tenth, and by Ludovicus Vives, the Spanish schoolmaster who became a fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in the fifteenth century.

There are at least two illustrated Anglo-Saxon editions of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, or 'Battle of the Soul between Vices and Virtues', extant, one at Cambridge and the other in the British Museum. This last was almost certainly used as a school-book as it is interlined in Anglo-Saxon. It ought to be reproduced in facsimile as a striking specimen of Anglo-Saxon art.

Parts of Prudentius' *Daily Hymns* (*Liber Cathemerinon*) appear in the Sarum Service books. Some of them have been translated into

[1] Cum sua gentiles studeant figmenta poetae
Grandisonis pompare modis tragicoque boatu,
Ridiculove Getae seu qualibet arte canendi,
Saeva nefandarum renovent contagia rerum
Et scelerum monumenta canant, rituque magistro
Plurima Niliacis tradent mendacia biblis,
Cur ego Davidicis assuetus cantibus odas
. . . . . .
Clara salutiferi taceam miracula Christi,
Cum possim manifesta loqui, Dominumque tonantem
Sensibus et toto delectet corde fateri?

English verse no longer ago than 1890. They are couched in various metres, sapphics, hendecasyllabics, asclepiads, and what not, but the most used is that which became the predominant metre of mediaeval hymns, the 'dimeter Iambic'. Now of the twelve Cathemerinon, the last two are on Christmas Day (*Hymnus Octavo Kalendas Ianuarias*), and on Twelfth Night (*Hymnus Epiphaniae*), and one of Milton's earliest efforts, in sacred poetry at least, is the hymn *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*. Speaking generally, we cannot but feel that Milton had read the one before he wrote the other. In particular, though Milton is to Prudentius as an organ to a harpsichord, yet it cannot be doubted that the splendid pathos of Milton's description of the desertion of the shrines of the heathen gods on the birth of Christ is directly inspired by Prudentius. 'Since God clothed himself with his mother's flesh,' says Prudentius, in Sir George Young's translation ;[1]—

> Silence prevails within the Delphian cave,
> The tripod gapes, the Sybils cease to rave ;
> Her streams have vanished from Dodona's grot ;
> Cumae is mute and Ammon answers not.
> . . . . . .
> I see the shades I summoned scour away,
> Lured by no savour backward to the day.
> Her torch extinguished and her scourge untied
> Persephone affrighted turns aside.
> No mystic spell, no magic charms avail
> . . . . . .
> The laurel slips from off the Flamen's head.[2]

[1] *Translations from Prudentius*, p. 112, ed. by F. St. John Thackeray. Bell, 1890.

[2] Prud. *Apoth.* 435–44, 474–8 :

> Ex quo mortalem praestrinxit spiritus alvum
> Spiritus ille Dei, Deus et se corpore matris
> Induit, atque hominem de virginitate creavit :
> Delphica dampnatis tacuerunt sortibus antra,
> Non tripodas cortina tegit, non spumat anhelus
> Fata Sibyllinis fanaticus edita libris.
> Perdidit insanos mendax Dodona vapores,
> Mortua iam mutae lugent oracula Cumae,
> Nec responsa refert Libycis in Syrtibus Ammon :
> . . . . . .
> Accitas video longe dispergier umbras.
> Territa Persephone vertit vestigia retro
> Extinctis facibus, tracto fugitiva flagello.
> Nil agit arcanum murmur nil Thessala prosunt
> Carmina turbatis, revocat nulla hostia manes.
> . . . . . .
> Flamen et ipse tuas miratur vertice laurus
> Cedere.

These are stanzas nineteen and twenty-one of Milton's hymn:

> The oracles are dumb
> No voice or hideous hum
> Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving;
> Apollo from his shrine
> Can no more divine,
> With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving;
> No nightly trance or breathèd spell
> Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.
> . . . . . .
> In consecrated earth,
> And on the holy hearth,
> The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
> In urns and altars round,
> A drear and dying sound
> Affrights the flamens at their service quaint.

A curious feature of this passage is that, while undoubtedly inspired, as a whole, by Prudentius, many of its details are due to another of the 'Cristyn auctours' prescribed by Colet, for St. Paul's School, Baptista Mantuanus. He was rather an odd companion for Lactantius and Prudentius. For John the Baptist of Mantua, or, in his native tongue, Giovanni Spagnuoli, was a Carthusian monk, who lived ten centuries after Prudentius. He produced in the last quarter of the fifteenth century Latin poetry of many kinds, held by his contemporaries to be of supreme quality. Colet's conjunction of him with the fifth-century writers is much as if a modern school scheme-master were to recommend in one breath, as models of English verse, Chaucer and Mr. George Meredith.

The most popular of the Mantuan's poems were his 'Bucolics', which were supposed to combine all the elegance of Virgil's 'Eclogues' without any of their grossness. Shakespeare makes Holofernes, the pedantic schoolmaster—most probably George Hunt, of Magdalen College, Oxford, Head Master of the Grammar School of Stratford-on-Avon—quote the first line 'Fauste, precor gelida'; a sufficient proof that it was a common Elizabethan school-book. The *Hymn of the Nativity* makes the inference irresistible that 'old Mantuan', as Holofernes calls him, continued to be read at St. Paul's in Jacobean days.

For in the stanzas just quoted, the Lemures clearly come from Mantuanus' lines,[1] 'The Lemures[2] driven from their shrines, through

[1] This and the other parallels cited are derived from a paper by Mr. Albert S. Cook in *Mod. Lang. Rev.* ii. Jan. 2, 1907, to which Professor Robertson drew my attention since this paper was read.

[2] Mantuan. ed. 1513, I. 236 *b*:

> Ex adytis pulsi lemures per inania terrae
> Spiramenta viam celeres iniere sub ima

the empty breathing holes of earth fled swiftly to lowest hell,' while Osiris and Anubis, who appear in stanzas 23 and 24, and 'the mooned Ashtaroth' and 'Thammuz mourned', in stanza 22, were derived from other parts of the same poem, the *Parthenice*. It is even more clear that the description of the 'universal peace through sea and land' which heralded the Nativity, 'the birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave', and 'the trumpet spake not to the armed throng' come from Mantuanus. 'There was peace; and safe repose had quelled the whole broad world; no trumpets, no arms sounded',[1] and 'the halcyon's offspring, new pledges of love, with flapping wings dared to rise and try their earliest flights.'[2] Even Mantuanus' rather untranslatable lines, 'There are who tell how the Dragon with burning brow dragged his tail dipped in Phlegethon (i. e. in flame), through the highest heaven' appear in the 'old dragon' who 'swinged the scaly horror of his folded tail.'[3] There can be no doubt of the indebtedness of Milton to these passages. Yet nothing more strikingly shows the manner in which Milton transfigured his borrowed materials and transmuted dross into gold, than the way in which these somewhat prosaic poets of his schooldays have been transfigured and transmuted in the *Hymn of the Nativity*.

So too Prudentius' *Hamartigenia* or 'Origin of Sin', and his *Psychomachia*, or 'War of the Virtues and Vices', the one with its elaborate arguments, that the devil, the author of evil, was not an independent potentate but a subordinate prince, who had fallen through envy, its description, said to be the first written, at least in poetry, of the Christian heaven and hell, and the other with its battles of helmed and shielded spirits, were probably the first suggestions to Milton of Satan, the hero of *Paradise Lost*, of the War in Heaven, and the theological discussions in it. Enough has been said to carry conviction to readers that the books prescribed by Colet in 1518 were still read

Tartara, secretisque diu latuere cavernis.

. . . . . .

I. 79 *a*. Parthenices primo ingressi simulacra per omnem
Legimus Aegyptum subita cecidisse ruina
Et collisa solo. Iacuit resupinus Anubis,
Cornibus auratis solio ruit Isis ab alto,
Occidit extemplo luctu quaesitus Osiris.

[1] Mant. I. 67 *b*. Pax erat et domitum late placaverat orbem
Tuta quies; nusquam litui, non arma sonabant.

[2] Ibid. 70 *b*. Halcyonis foetae variis nova pignora pennis
Iam tolli audebant, primosque efferre volatus.

[3] Ibid. 72 *a*. Sunt quoque qui summum traxisse per aethera caudam
Fronte sub ardenti mersa[m] Phlegethonte Draconem
Commemorent.

at St. Paul's in 1618, and gave the mind of Milton its bent towards the subjects of which they treated, and many hints in their treatment. St. Paul's School, therefore, may claim a more direct share in the splendid achievements of its greatest scholar than can be claimed by any other school in the works of its great alumni.

II. Milton as Schoolmaster.

One ought perhaps to apologize to Milton for venturing to dub him schoolmaster. It was a title which he vehemently repudiated himself, and which his favourite pupil, Edward Phillips, vehemently repudiated for him:

> Possibly his proceeding thus far in the education of youth may have been the occasion of some of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and schoolmaster. Whereas it is well known he never set up for a public school to teach all the young fry of a parish, but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to relations, and the sons of some gentlemen that were his intimate friends; besides that, neither his converse, nor his writings, nor his manner of teaching, ever savoured in the least anything of pedantry; and probably he might have some prospect of putting in practice his academical institution, according to the model laid down in his sheet of education.

It seems probable that it was partly to the younger Gill's influence that Milton's becoming a schoolmaster may be attributed. At all events, when Milton, after his return from Italy in 1640, settled in London, leaving his father in the country with his royalist second son, Christopher, it was to a house in Aldersgate, a few doors from Gill, who had set up a private academy there, that he repaired. Milton's life as a schoolmaster is as barren of facts as his life as a schoolboy. It lasted only about seven years. It was carried on first in the house in Aldersgate Street, then a suburb, the houses having gardens, while the end of the street bordered on the open country. Later, in 1645, as there was a prospect of more pupils, Milton removed to a larger house in the Barbican. But after his father's death in 1647, and consequent accession of income, accompanied by increasing interest in the political struggle, Milton abandoned schoolmastering for political pamphleteering. Professor Masson has drawn up a list of ascertained pupils, who with barely an exception are of an aristocratic kind, sons of people with handles to their names, when a handle was by no means so common as now.

Though to Milton school was but an interlude, it was one into which he entered with his accustomed thoroughness, and with his usual disregard of conventional doctrines. As everything that John Milton did or thought was not only of supreme importance to himself, but to the world at large, Milton, as schoolmaster, was bound sooner or later to

leave his mark in literature. There are two literary productions of his on the subject. The *Accedence commenced Grammar*, not published till 1669, when everything the author of *Paradise Lost* had written became of value, was no doubt a product of this period, fished out for the printer over twenty years later. The *Tractate on Education*, written, at the invitation of Samuel Hartlib, a Dutchman and educational reformer, resident in England, was published in 1644. They both begin with the same complaint, which is still vexing the soul of the educational reformer two and a half centuries later. 'We do amiss to spend seven or eight years merely in scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek;' says, after compliments, the *Tractate on Education*. The *Accedence* begins: 'It hath been long a general complaint, not without cause, in the bringing up of youth, and still is, that the tenth part of man's life ordinarily extended is taken up in learning, and that very scarcely, the Latin Tongue,' 'which tardy proficience' Milton attributed to 'making two labours of one by learning first the accedence, then the grammar, in Latin, ere the language of those rules be understood'. 'The only remedy was to join both books in one, and in the English tongue.' The *Accedence* is accordingly a Latin grammar written in English, and with much simplified rules, most exceptions being omitted and relegated 'to a good dictionary', which also this indefatigable worker had on hand, 'stored with good authorities'. The odd title seems to mean a grammar commenced with the accidence instead of the learning 'touching letters and syllables which is omitted as little different from an English spelling book'. It was perhaps the first complete Latin grammar in English, though Holt's *Lac Puerorum* in the beginning of the sixteenth century had allowed the babes to lap their Latin in that tongue, and Milton's contemporary, Hoole, had published a translated Lilly. It has not been the last. But the youth of the upper classes in England still take a tenth or more of their lives to learn little Latin and less Greek, and it may be questioned whether at the end most of them can read a Latin book or write a Latin exercise so well as those bred up on the unmitigated Lilly.

The *Tractate on Education* sought to supply a larger remedy for this waste of time by 'a complete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices, both public and private, of peace and war. And how all this may be done between twelve and twenty-one, less time than is now bestowed in pure trifling at grammar and sophistry, is thus ordered.'

He then proceeds to set out his plan for an Academy, at once school and university, in a spacious house and grounds, such as then

occupied by John Milton, Esquire, of the Barbican. But whereas he had only at the outside some 30 pupils, this was to be for 150, including 20 servants. Here he was in advance of his age. Except Eton, and to a lesser extent Winchester, there was no school in England which enjoyed good recreation grounds. 'For their studies', to begin with, we are brought up short with the inevitable Latin grammar. Though Hartlib, under the influence of the Czech-German Comenius, was advocating a 'Reformed School' which began with English, Milton will have none of the modern '*Januas* and *Didactics*,' as Comenius' books were called, which he had not read and did not intend to read—'more than ever I shall read'. Latin is without question assumed as the only and necessary medium of education. Nor, in an age when not only all scientific works were in Latin, but even Milton himself, when he wished to attack a theological opponent or defend the execution of Charles I, had to write in Latin, was this assumption unreasonable. His authority is no authority on this for present times. Having to use Latin, Milton insists that Latin shall be pronounced in the modern method 'as near as may be to the Italian, especially in the vowels'.

The main thesis of the *Tractate* is that things should be learnt, not words.

> Language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known. And though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet if he have not studied the solid things in them, as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man, as any yeoman or tradesman competently wise in his mother dialect only.

With this end grammar was to be learnt out of 'some easy and delightful book of education' as Cebes, Plutarch, Quintilian, with 'lectures and explanations', and the Milton touch is applied 'that they may be inflamed with the study of learning and the admiration of virtue; stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God, and famous to all ages'. After grammar, mathematics. But the mathematicians will hardly approve of the space given to them. Arithmetic was to be taught 'at some other hour of the day, and soon after the elements of geometry, even playing, as the old manner was'.

Then we come to things. First, agriculture was to be learnt from Cato, Varro, and Columella. Next geography and the use of the globes, 'in any modern author'. In Greek, 'the difficulties of grammar being soon overcome,'

> all the historical physiology of Aristotle and Theophrastus are open before them; with Vitruvius and Seneca's *Natural Questions*; then they descend to trigonometry, fortification, architecture, enginery, or navigation; and in natural

philosophy leisurely from the history of meteors, minerals, plants, and living creatures as far as anatomy. Then out of some not tedious writer the institution of physic that they may know how to manage a crudity [i. e. indigestion].

Apparently all boys were to learn all things. The objection which would at once arise from the modern advocate of learning things to the bookish nature of all this learning is met by the remark, 'To set forward all those proceeding in nature and mathematics, what hinders but that they may procure . . the helpful experience of hunters, fowlers, fishermen, shepherds, gardeners, apothecaries ; and in the other sciences, architects, engineers, mariners, anatomists.'

But this is not all. The boys will now have acquired 'the art of reason called Proairesis' or the choice of good and evil. So enter Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, kept in order by David and Solomon and the Evangelists. Then the pupils proceed to economics, 'and now as before they may have learned at any odd hour the Italian tongue'. Soon after they go on to Greek, Latin, or Italian comedies and tragedies 'which treat of household matters.' Then come politics, next law, from Moses and Lycurgus to Justinian and the common and statute law of England. Sunday is devoted to theology, and 'the Hebrew tongue at a set hour might have been gained, . . whereto it would be no impossibility to add the Chaldee and the Syrian dialect.' Next come histories, epics, and tragedies 'of stateliest and most regal argument', many to be learnt by heart and declaimed. 'Lastly' will be time for the 'organic arts,' logic, rhetoric, the laws of poetry, the practice of composition in writing and speaking. 'Whether they be to speak in Parliament or council, honour and attention would be waiting on their lips. There would then also appear in pulpits other visage, other gestures, and stuff otherwise wrought, than what we now sit under.'

Exercise was not to be neglected. Fencing, wrestling, music, especially 'after meat to assist and cherish nature in her first concoction', military manœuvres, excursions on horseback, sailing. We shall not then 'need the monsieurs of Paris to take our hopeful youth into their slight and prodigal custodies, and send them over back again transformed into mimics, apes, and kickshaws.'

The programme is so vast with its mathematics, Italian, Hebrew, Chaldee learnt in odd hours, its dismissal of the difficulties of Latin prose with the casual assumption 'ere half these authors be read they cannot but be masters of any ordinary prose' and of Greek with the aside 'the difficulties of grammar being soon overcome', that if the writer were any one but Milton we should suppose that the *Tractate on Education* was an elaborate skit on the expert in education, 'the educationist'—horrid word and still more horrid thing—of that day.

But we are precluded from maintaining this view by three considerations. First, the solemn conclusion which Milton addresses to Master Hartlib. He admits

> This is not a bow for every man to shoot in that counts himself a teacher, but will require sinews almost equal to those which Homer gave Ulysses; yet I am withal persuaded that it may prove much more illustrious, howbeit, not more difficult, than I imagine, and that imagination presents me with nothing but very happy and very possible according to best wishes, if God have so decreed and this age have spirit and capacity enough to apprehend.

The second consideration is that, as Milton points out, 'the course of study hitherto described is what I can guess by reading likest to those ancient and famous schools of Pythagoras, Plato, Isocrates, Aristotle, and such others.' These, of course, were not schools at all in our sense of the word. But the encyclopaedia of universal knowledge which Milton's academy was to bestow is not a whit more all-embracing than the ideal education of the perfect orator as set forth by Cicero, *De Oratore*, and in Quintilian's *Institutes*. But the third, and the chief and most convincing consideration, is that Milton's theory of education was but slightly idealized from Milton's practice in educating. This amazing programme was, according to Edward Phillips, Milton's earliest and most constant pupil, whom he taught from the age of ten to the age of seventeen, in large part actually carried out. In his *Life of Milton* Phillips mentions the

> many authors which through his excellent judgment and way of teaching, far above the pedantry of common public schools (where such authors are scarce ever heard of), were run over.

The list comprises, on agriculture, Cato, Varro, Columella, Palladius; Celsus, a physician; Pliny's Natural History, Vitruvius' Architecture, Frontinus' Stratagems, Aratus' Phenomena, Dionysius Afer de situ orbis, Oppian's Cyngeticks, and Halieuticks (i. e. on dogs and fishing), Geminus' Astronomy, Polyaenus' Warlike Stratagems, besides the ordinary classics. The Pentateuch in Hebrew 'a good entrance into the Targum or Chaldee Paraphrase', several chapters of St. Matthew in Syriac; besides Urstitius' Arithmetic, Riff's Geometry, Petiscus' Trigonometry, Johannes de sacro Bosco De Sphaera; in Italian, Villani's History; and in French, Davity, 'the famous geographer of France'. On Sundays Greek Testament and a Perfect System of Divinity were read, collected by himself from the ablest of divines, 'Amesius, Wellebius, &c.' After all, this is not more amazing to modern notions than the tremendous list of books and subjects which Charles Hoole recommends for 'the common public school' in his *Discovery*, only

that the latter is mostly linguistic and grammatical. Nor was the programme so impossible when the school hours were from 7 to 11 a.m. and 1 to 5 p.m., with only one half-holiday a week, and home-work till midnight, as Milton himself did, to finish his prose and verse tasks, thus ensuring a twelve hours' working day, as it seems to our degenerate seven or eight hours' day. But when one remembers the horror that Virgil's *Georgics* inspired in the endeavour to remember the name of some unknown plant in Latin which was still more unknown in English and in fact, one cannot think that Frontinus or Vitruvius, Polyaenus or Oppian are fit food for schoolboys, whatever hands may minister it. After all, *Non omnia possumus omnes.* Milton's *Tractate* suffers under the same disadvantage as Elliot's *De regimine Principum*, Ascham's *Scholemaster*, Locke's *Theory* and most treatises on education. It proceeded not from experience of a public school, but from that of a private tutor. Theories of education which may be all very well when applied by a single master of exceptional ability and enthusiasm to one or two pupils, to whom individual and exclusive attention is given, are incapable of application to the common crowd in a common school by a common man.

Still, Milton the Schoolmaster anticipated in theory what has since been partly realized in practice, the danger of exclusive bookishness, and the necessity of combining practical work with theoretical instruction. As a schoolmaster, as in everything else, he was miraculous in industry, magnificent in ideas, and splendid in style. In a word, he was Miltonic.

ANNUAL LECTURE ON A MASTER MIND
HENRIETTE HERTZ TRUST

MILTON

By T. S. ELIOT

Read 26 March 1947

ANNUAL LECTURE ON A MASTER MIND
HENRIETTE HERTZ TRUST

MILTON

By T. S. ELIOT

Read 26 March 1947

SAMUEL JOHNSON, addressing himself to examine Milton's versification, in the *Rambler* of Saturday, 12 January 1751, thought it necessary to excuse his temerity in writing upon a subject already so fully discussed. In justification of his essay this great critic and poet remarked: 'There are, in every age, new errors to be rectified, and new prejudices to be opposed.' I am obliged to phrase my own apology rather differently. The errors of our own times have been rectified by vigorous hands, and the prejudices opposed by commanding voices. Some of the errors and prejudices have been associated with my own name, and of these in particular I shall find myself impelled to speak; it will, I hope, be attributed to me for modesty rather than for conceit if I maintain that no one can correct an error with better authority than the person who has been held responsible for it. And there is, I think, another justification for my speaking about Milton, besides the singular one which I have just given. The champions of Milton in our time, with one notable exception, have been scholars and teachers. I have no claim to be either: I am aware that my only claim upon your attention, in speaking of Milton or of any other great poet, is by appeal to your curiosity, in the hope that you may care to know what a contemporary writer of verse thinks of one of his predecessors.

I believe that the scholar and the practitioner in the field of literary criticism should supplement each other's work. The criticism of the practitioner will be all the better, certainly, if he is not wholly destitute of scholarship; and the criticism of the scholar will be all the better if he has some experience of the difficulties of writing verse. But the orientation of the two critics is different. The scholar is more concerned with the understanding of the masterpiece in the environment of its author: with the world in which that author lived, the temper of his age, his intellectual formation, the books which he had read, and the influences which had moulded him. The practitioner is concerned less with the author than with the poem; and with the poem in relation to his own age. He asks: Of what

use is the poetry of this poet to poets writing to-day? Is it, or can it become, a living force in English poetry still unwritten? So we may say that the scholar's interest is in the permanent, the practitioner's in the immediate. The scholar can teach us where we should bestow our *admiration* and *respect*: the practitioner should be able, when he is the right poet talking about the right poet, to make an old masterpiece actual, give it contemporary importance, and persuade his audience that it is interesting, exciting, enjoyable, and *active*. I can give only one example of contemporary criticism of Milton, by a critic of the type to which I belong if I have any critical pretensions at all: that is the Introduction to Milton's *English Poems* in the 'World's Classics' series, by the late Charles Williams. It is not a comprehensive essay; it is notable primarily because it provides the best prolegomenon to *Comus* which any modern reader could have; but what distinguishes it throughout (and the same is true of most of Williams's critical writing) is the author's warmth of feeling and his success in communicating it to the reader. In this, so far as I am aware, the essay of Williams is a solitary example.

I think it is useful, in such an examination as I propose to make, to keep in mind some critic of the past, of one's own type, by whom to measure one's opinions: a critic sufficiently remote in time, for his local errors and prejudices to be not identical with one's own. That is why I began by quoting Samuel Johnson. It will hardly be contested that as a critic of poetry Johnson wrote as a practitioner and not as a scholar. Because he was a poet himself, and a good poet, what he wrote about poetry must be read with respect. And unless we know and appreciate Johnson's poetry we cannot judge either the merits or the limitations of his criticism. It is a pity that what the common reader to-day has read, or has remembered, or has seen quoted, are mostly those few statements of Johnson's from which later critics have vehemently dissented. But when Johnson held an opinion which seems to us wrong, we are never safe in dismissing it without inquiring why he was wrong; he had his own 'errors and prejudices', certainly, but for lack of examining them sympathetically we are always in danger of merely countering error with error and prejudice with prejudice. Now Johnson was, in his day, very much a modern: he was concerned with how poetry should be written in his own time. The fact that he came towards the end, rather than the beginning of a style, the fact that his time was rapidly passing away, and that

the canons of taste which he observed were about to fall into desuetude, does not diminish the interest of his criticism. Nor does the likelihood that the development of poetry in the next fifty years will take quite different directions from those which to me seem desirable to explore, deter me from asking the questions that Johnson implied: How should poetry be written now? and what place does the answer to this question give to Milton? And I think that the answers to these questions may be different now from the answers that were correct twenty-five years ago.

There is one prejudice against Milton, apparent on almost every page of Johnson's *Life of Milton*, which I imagine is still general: we, however, with a longer historical perspective, are in a better position than was Johnson to recognize it and to make allowance for it. This is a prejudice which I share myself: an antipathy towards Milton the man. Of this in itself I have nothing further to say: all that is necessary is to record one's awareness of it. But this prejudice is often involved with another, more obscure: and I do not think that Johnson had disengaged the two in his own mind. The fact is simply that the Civil War of the seventeenth century, in which Milton is a symbolic figure, has never been concluded. The Civil War is not ended: I question whether any serious civil war ever does end. Throughout that period English society was so convulsed and divided that the effects are still felt. Reading Johnson's essay one is always aware that Johnson was obstinately and passionately of another party. No other English poet, not Wordsworth, or Shelley, lived through or took sides in such momentous events as did Milton; of no other poet is it so difficult to consider the poetry simply as poetry, without our theological and political dispositions, conscious and unconscious, inherited or acquired, making an unlawful entry. And the danger is all the greater because these emotions now take different vestures. It is now considered grotesque, on political grounds, to be of the party of King Charles; it is now, I believe, considered equally grotesque, on moral grounds, to be of the party of the Puritans; and to most persons to-day the religious views of both parties may seem equally remote. Nevertheless, the passions are unquenched, and if we are not very wide awake their smoke will obscure the glass through which we examine Milton's poetry. Something has been done, certainly, to persuade us that Milton was never really of any party, but disagreed with everyone. Mr. Wilson Knight, in *Chariot of Wrath*, has argued that Milton was

more a monarchist than a republican, and not in any modern sense a 'democrat'. And Professor Saurat has produced evidence to show that Milton's theology was highly eccentric, and as scandalous to Protestants as to Catholics—that he was, in fact, a sort of Christadelphian, and perhaps not a very orthodox Christadelphian at that; while on the other hand Mr. C. S. Lewis has opposed Professor Saurat by skilfully arguing that Milton, at least in *Paradise Lost*, can be acquitted of heresy even from a point of view so orthodox as that of Mr. Lewis himself. On these questions I hold no opinion: it is probably beneficial to question the assumption that Milton was a sound Free Churchman and member of the Liberal Party; but I think that we still have to be on guard against an unconscious partisanship if we aim to attend to the poetry for the poetry's sake.

So much for our prejudices. I come next to the positive objection to Milton which has been raised in our own time, that is to say, the charge that he is an unwholesome influence. And from this I shall proceed to the permanent strictures of reproof (to employ a phrase of Johnson's) and, finally, to the grounds on which I consider him a great poet and one whom poets to-day might study with profit.

For a statement of the *generalized* belief in the unwholesomeness of Milton's influence I turn to Mr. Middleton Murry's critique of Milton in his *Heaven and Earth*—a book which contains chapters of profound insight, interrupted by passages which seem to me intemperate. Mr. Murry approaches Milton after his long and patient study of Keats; and it is through the eyes of Keats that he sees Milton.

> Keats [Mr. Murry writes] as a poetic artist, second to none since Shakespeare, and Blake, as a prophet of spiritual values unique in our history, both passed substantially the same judgment on Milton: 'Life to him would be death to me.' And whatever may be our verdict on the development of English poetry since Milton, we must admit the justice of Keats's opinion that Milton's magnificence led nowhere. 'English must be kept up,' said Keats. To be influenced beyond a certain point by Milton's art, he felt, dammed the creative flow of the English genius in and through itself. In saying this, I think, Keats voiced the very inmost of the English genius. To pass under the spell of Milton is to be condemned to imitate him. It is quite different with Shakespeare. Shakespeare baffles and liberates; Milton is perspicuous and constricts.

This is a very confident affirmation, and I criticize it with some diffidence because I cannot pretend to have devoted as much study to Keats, or to have as intimate an understanding of his

difficulties, as Mr. Murry. But Mr. Murry seems to me here to be trying to transform the predicament of a particular poet with a particular aim at a particular moment in time into a censure of timeless validity. He appears to assert that the liberative function of Shakespeare and the constrictive menace of Milton are permanent characteristics of these two poets. 'To be influenced beyond a certain point' by any one master is bad for any poet; and it does not matter whether that influence is Milton's or another's; and as we cannot anticipate where that point will come, we might be better advised to call it an *un*certain point. If it is not good to remain under the spell of Milton, is it good to remain under the spell of Shakespeare? It depends partly upon what genre of poetry you are trying to develop. Keats wanted to write an epic, and he found, as might be expected, that the time had not arrived at which another English epic, comparable in grandeur to *Paradise Lost*, could be written. He also tried his hand at writing plays: and one might argue that *King Stephen* was more blighted by Shakespeare than *Hyperion* by Milton. Certainly, *Hyperion* remains a magnificent fragment which one re-reads; and *King Stephen* is a play which we may have read once, but to which we never return for enjoyment. Milton made a great epic impossible for succeeding generations; Shakespeare made a great poetic drama impossible; such a situation is inevitable, and it persists until the language has so altered that there is no danger, because no possibility, of imitation. Anyone who tries to write poetic drama, even to-day, should know that half of his energy must be exhausted in the effort to escape from the constricting toils of Shakespeare: the moment his attention is relaxed, or his mind fatigued, he will lapse into bad Shakespearian verse. For a long time after an epic poet like Milton, or a dramatic poet like Shakespeare, nothing can be done. Yet the effort must be repeatedly made; for we can never know in advance when the moment is approaching at which a new epic, or a new drama, will be possible; and when the moment does draw near it may be that the genius of an individual poet will perform the last mutation of idiom and versification which will bring that new poetry into being.

I have referred to Mr. Murry's view of the bad influence of Milton as generalized, because it is implicitly the whole personality of Milton that is in question: not specifically his beliefs, or his language or versification, but the beliefs as realized in that particular personality, and his poetry as the expression of it. By the *particular* view of Milton's influence as bad, I mean that

view which attends to the language, the syntax, the versification, the imagery. I do not suggest that there is here a complete difference of subject-matter: it is the difference of approach, the difference of the focus of interest, between the philosophical critic and the literary critic. An incapacity for the abstruse, and an interest in poetry which is primarily a technical interest, dispose my mind towards the more limited and perhaps more superficial task. Let us proceed to look at Milton's influence from this point of view, that of the writer of poetry in our own time.

The reproach against Milton, that his technical influence has been bad, appears to have been made by no one more positively than by myself. I find myself saying, as recently as 1936, that this charge against Milton

> appears a good deal more serious if we affirm that Milton's poetry could *only* be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatever. It is more serious, also, if we affirm that Milton's bad influence may be traced much farther than the eighteenth century, and much farther than upon bad poets: if we say that it was an influence against which we still have to struggle.

In writing these sentences I failed to draw a threefold distinction, which now seems to me of some importance. There are three separate assertions implied. The first is, that an influence has been bad in the past: this is to assert that good poets, in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, would have written better if they had not submitted themselves to the influence of Milton. The second assertion is, that the contemporary situation is such that Milton is a master whom we should avoid. The third is, that the influence of Milton, or of any particular poet, can be *always* bad, and that we can predict that wherever it is found, at any time in the future, however remote, it will be a bad influence. Now, the first and third of these assertions I am no longer prepared to make, because, detached from the second, they do not appear to me to have any meaning.

For the first, when we consider one great poet of the past, and one or more other poets, upon whom we say he has exerted a bad influence, we must admit that the responsibility, if there be any, is rather with the poets who were influenced than with the poet whose work exerted the influence. We can, of course, show that certain tricks or mannerisms which the imitators display are due to conscious or unconscious imitation and emulation, but that is a reproach against their injudicious choice of a model and not against their model itself. And we

can never prove that any particular poet would have written better poetry if he had escaped that influence. Even if we assert, what can only be a matter of faith, that Keats would have written a very great epic poem if Milton had not preceded him, is it sensible to repine for an unwritten masterpiece, in exchange for one which we possess and acknowledge? And as for the remote future, what can we affirm about the poetry that will be written then, except that we should probably be unable to understand or to enjoy it, and that therefore we can hold no opinion as to what 'good' and 'bad' influences will *mean* in that future? The only relation in which the question of influence, good and bad, is significant, is the relation to the immediate future. With that question I shall engage at the end. I wish first to mention another reproach against Milton, that represented by the phrase 'dissociation of sensibility'.

I remarked many years ago, in an essay on Dryden, that

> In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was due to the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden.

The longer passage from which this sentence is taken is quoted by Dr. Tillyard in his *Milton*. Dr. Tillyard makes the following comment:

> Speaking only of what in this passage concerns Milton, I would say that there is here a mixture of truth and falsehood. Some sort of dissociation of sensibility in Milton, not necessarily undesirable, has to be admitted; but that he was responsible for any such dissociation in others (at least till this general dissociation had inevitably set in) is untrue.

I believe that the general affirmation represented by the phrase 'dissociation of sensibility' (one of the two or three phrases of my coinage—like 'objective correlative'—which have had a success in the world astonishing to their author) retains some validity; but I now incline to agree with Dr. Tillyard that to lay the burden on the shoulders of Milton and Dryden was a mistake. If such a dissociation did take place, I suspect that the causes are too complex and too profound to justify our accounting for the change in terms of literary criticism. All we can say is, that something like this did happen; that it had something to do with the Civil War; that it would even be unwise to say it was caused by the Civil War, but that it is a consequence of the same causes which brought about the Civil War; that we must seek the causes in Europe, not in England alone;

and for what these causes were, we may dig and dig until we get to a depth at which words and concepts fail us.[1]

Before proceeding to take up the case against Milton, as it stood for poets twenty-five years ago—the second, and only significant meaning of 'bad influence'—I think it would be best to consider what permanent strictures of reproof may be drawn: those censures which, when we make them, we must assume to be made by enduring laws of taste. The essence of the permanent censure of Milton is, I believe, to be found in Johnson's essay. This is not the place in which to examine certain particular and erroneous judgements of Johnson; to explain his condemnation of *Comus* and *Samson* by his applying dramatic canons which to us seem inapplicable; or to condone his dismissal of the versification of *Lycidas* by the specialization, rather than the absence, of his sense of rhythm. Johnson's most important censure of Milton is contained in three paragraphs, which I must ask leave to quote in full.

> Throughout all his greater works [says Johnson] there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *diction*, a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer; and which is so far removed from common use, that an unlearned reader, when he first opens the book, finds himself surprised by a new language.
>
> This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong with Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suited to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language*, says Addison, *sunk under him*. But the truth is, that both in prose and in verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantic principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for there judgment operates freely, neither softened by the beauty, nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.
>
> Milton's style was not modified by his subject; what is shown with greater extent in 'Paradise Lost' may be found in 'Comus'. One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets; the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian; perhaps sometimes

[1] On one point I should take issue with Dr. Tillyard. A little further on he quotes another phrase of mine, of earlier date: 'The Chinese Wall of Milton's blank verse.' He comments: 'It must have been an ineffective wall, for *Venice Preserved*, *All for Love* and similar plays in blank verse were not confined by it; they owe nothing to Milton's versification.' Of course not—these were *plays*, and I have long maintained that dramatic blank verse and non-dramatic blank verse are not the same thing. The Chinese Wall there, if it existed, was erected by Shakespeare.

combined with other tongues. Of him at last, may be said what Jonson said of Spenser, that he *wrote no language*, but has formed what Butler called a *Babylonish dialect*, in itself harsh and barbarous, but made by exalted genius and extensive learning the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

This criticism seems to me substantially true: indeed, unless we accept it, I do not think we are in the way to appreciate the peculiar greatness of Milton. His style is not a *classic* style, in that it is not the elevation of a *common* style, by the final touch of genius, to greatness. It is, from the foundation, and in every particular, a personal style, not based upon common speech, or common prose, or direct communication of meaning. Of some great poetry one has difficulty in pronouncing just what it is, what infinitesimal touch, that has made all the difference from a plain statement which anyone could make; the slight transformation which, while it leaves a plain statement a plain statement, has made it at the same time great poetry. In Milton there is always the maximal, never the minimal, alteration of ordinary language. Every distortion of construction, the foreign idiom, the use of a word in a foreign way or with the meaning of the foreign word from which it is derived rather than the accepted meaning in English, every idiosyncrasy is a particular act of violence which Milton has been the first to commit. There is no cliché, no poetic diction in the derogatory sense, but a perpetual sequence of original acts of lawlessness. Of all modern writers of verse, the nearest analogy seems to me to be Mallarmé, a much smaller poet, though still a great one. The personalities, the poetic theories of the two men could not have been more different; but in respect of the violence which they could do to language, and justify, there is a remote similarity. Milton's poetry is poetry at the farthest possible remove from prose; his prose seems to me too near to half-formed poetry to be good prose.

To say that the work of a poet is at the farthest possible remove from prose would once have struck me as condemnatory: it now seems to me simply, when we have to do with a Milton, the precision of its peculiar greatness. As a poet, Milton seems to me probably the greatest of all eccentrics. His work illustrates no general principles of good writing; the only principles of writing that it illustrates are such as are valid only for Milton himself to observe. There are two kinds of poet who can ordinarily be of use to other poets. There are those who suggest to one or another of their successors, something which they have

not done themselves, or who provoke a different way of doing the same thing: these are likely to be not the greatest, but smaller, imperfect poets with whom later poets discover an affinity. And there are the great poets from whom we can learn negative rules: no poet can teach another to write well, but some great poets can teach others some of the things to avoid. They teach us what to avoid, by showing us what great poetry can do without—how *bare* it can be. Of these are Dante and Racine. But if we are ever to make use of Milton we must do so in quite a different way. Even a small poet can learn something from the study of Dante, or from the study of Chaucer: we must perhaps wait for a great poet before we find one who can profit from the study of Milton.

I repeat that the remoteness of Milton's verse from ordinary speech, his invention of his own poetic language, seems to me one of the marks of his greatness. Other marks are his sense of structure, both in the general design of *Paradise Lost* and *Samson*, and in his syntax; and finally, and not least, his inerrancy, conscious or unconscious, in writing so as to make the best display of his talents, and the best concealment of his weaknesses.

The appropriateness of the subject of *Samson* is too obvious to expatiate upon: it was probably the one dramatic story out of which Milton could have made a masterpiece. But the complete suitability of *Paradise Lost* has not, I think, been so often remarked. It was surely an intuitive perception of what he could not do, that arrested Milton's project of an epic on King Arthur. For one thing, he had little interest in, or understanding of, individual human beings. In *Paradise Lost* he was not called upon for any of that understanding which comes from an affectionate observation of men and women. But such an interest in human beings was not required—indeed its *absence* was a necessary condition—for the creation of his figures of Adam and Eve. These are not a man and woman such as any we know: if they were, they would not be Adam and Eve. They are the original *Man* and *Woman*, not types, but prototypes: if they were not set apart from ordinary humanity they would not be Adam and Eve. They have the general characteristics of men and women, such that we can recognize, in the temptation and the fall, the first motions of the faults and virtues, the abjection and the nobility, of all their descendants. They have ordinary humanity to the right degree, and yet are not, and should not be, ordinary mortals. Were they more particularized they would be false, and if Milton had been more interested in

humanity, he could not have created them. Other critics have remarked upon the exactness, without defect or exaggeration, with which Moloch, Belial, and Mammon, in the second book, speak according to the particular sin which each represents. It would not be suitable that the infernal powers should have, in the human sense, characters, for a character is always mixed; but in the hands of an inferior manipulator, they might easily have been reduced to *humours*.

The appropriateness of the material of *Paradise Lost* to the genius and the limitations of Milton, is still more evident when we consider the visual imagery. I have already remarked, in a paper written some years ago,[1] on Milton's weakness of visual observation, a weakness which I think was always present—the effect of his blindness may have been rather to strengthen the compensatory qualities than to increase a fault which was already present. Mr. Wilson Knight, who has devoted close study to recurrent imagery in poetry, has called attention to Milton's propensity towards images of engineering and mechanics; to me it seems that Milton is at his best in imagery suggestive of vast size, limitless space, abysmal depth, and light and darkness. No theme and no setting, other than that which he chose in *Paradise Lost*, could have given him such scope for the kind of imagery in which he excelled, or made less demand upon those powers of visual imagination which were in him defective.

Most of the absurdities and inconsistencies to which Johnson calls attention, and which, so far as they can justly be isolated in this way, he properly condemns, will I think appear in a more correct proportion if we consider them in relation to this general judgement. I do not think that we should attempt to *see* very clearly any scene that Milton depicts: it should be accepted as a shifting phantasmagory. To complain, because we first find the arch-fiend 'chain'd on the burning lake', and in a minute or two see him making his way to the shore, is to expect a kind of consistency which the world to which Milton has introduced us does not require.

This limitation of visual power, like Milton's limited interest in human beings, turns out to be not merely a negligible defect, but a positive virtue, when we visit Adam and Eve in Eden. Just as a higher degree of characterization of Adam and Eve would have been unsuitable, so a more vivid picture of the earthly Paradise would have been less paradisiacal. For a

[1] In *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, vol. xxi, 1936, pp. 32 ff.

greater definiteness, a more detailed account of flora and fauna, could only have assimilated Eden to the landscapes of earth with which we are familiar. As it is, the impression of Eden which we retain, is the most suitable, and is that which Milton was most qualified to give: the impression of *light*—a daylight and a starlight, a light of dawn and of dusk, the light which, remembered by a man in his blindness, has a supernatural glory unexperienced by men of normal vision.

We must, then, in reading *Paradise Lost*, not expect to see clearly; our sense of sight must be blurred, so that our *hearing* may become more acute. *Paradise Lost*, like *Finnegans Wake* (for I can think of no work which provides a more interesting parallel: two great books by blind musicians, each writing a language of his own based upon English) makes this peculiar demand for a readjustment of the reader's mode of apprehension. The emphasis is on the sound, not the vision, upon the word, not the idea; and in the end it is the unique versification that is the most certain sign of Milton's intellectual mastership.

On the subject of Milton's versification, so far as I am aware, little enough has been written. We have Johnson's essay in the *Rambler*, which deserves more study than it has received, and we have a short treatise by Robert Bridges on *Milton's Prosody*. I speak of Bridges with respect, for no poet of our time has given such close attention to prosody as he. Bridges catalogues the systematic irregularities which give perpetual variety to Milton's verse, and I can find no fault with his analysis.[1] But however interesting these analyses are, I do not think that it is by such means that we gain an appreciation of the peculiar rhythm of a poet. It seems to me also that Milton's verse is especially refractory to yielding up its secrets to examination of the single line. For his verse is not formed in this way. It is the period, the sentence and still more the paragraph, that is the unit of Milton's verse; and emphasis on the line structure is the minimum necessary to provide a counter-pattern to the period structure. It is only in the period that the wave-length of

[1] Beyond raising one question, in connexion with Bridges's account of Milton's use of recessive accent. It does not seem to me that such recession, as of *obscéne* to *óbscene* in the line

Next Chemos, the obscene dread of Moab's sons

simply reverses the value of the two syllables: I should say that the second syllable retains something of its length, and the first something of its shortness, and that the surprise and variety are due to each syllable becoming *both* long and short. The effect is like that of a tide-rip, in which a peculiar type of wave is produced by the conflict of two opposing forces.

Milton's verse is to be found: it is his ability to give a perfect and unique pattern to every paragraph, such that the full beauty of the line is found in its context, and his ability to work in larger musical units than any other poet—that is to me the most conclusive evidence of Milton's supreme mastery. The peculiar feeling, almost a physical sensation of a breathless leap, communicated by Milton's long periods, and by his alone, is impossible to procure from rhymed verse. Indeed, this mastery is more conclusive evidence of his intellectual power, than is his grasp of any *ideas* that he borrowed or invented. To be able to control so many words at once is the token of a mind of most exceptional energy.

It is interesting at this point to recall the general observations upon blank verse, which a consideration of *Paradise Lost* prompted Johnson to make towards the end of his essay.

> The music of the English heroic lines strikes the ear so faintly, that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together; this co-operation can only be obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another as a distinct system of sounds; and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few skilful and happy readers of Milton, who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. *Blank verse*, said an ingenious critic, *seems to be verse only to the eye.*

Some of my audience may recall that this last remark, in almost the same words, was often made, a literary generation ago, about the 'free verse' of the period: and even without this encouragement from Johnson it would have occurred to my mind to declare Milton to be the greatest master of free verse in our language. What is interesting about Johnson's paragraph, however, is that it represents the judgement of a man who had by no means a deaf ear, but simply a *specialized* ear, for verbal music. Within the limits of the poetry of his own period, Johnson is a very good judge of the relative merits of several poets as writers of blank verse. But on the whole, the blank verse of his age might more properly be called unrhymed verse; and nowhere is this difference more evident than in the verse of his own tragedy *Irene*: the phrasing is admirable, the style elevated and correct, but each line cries out for a companion to rhyme with it. Indeed, it is only with labour, or by occasional inspiration, or by submission to the influence of the older dramatists, that the blank verse of the *nineteenth* century

succeeds in making the absence of rhyme inevitable and right, with the rightness of Milton. Even Johnson admitted that he could not wish that Milton had been a rhymer. Nor did the nineteenth century succeed in giving to blank verse the flexibility which it needs if the tone of common speech, talking of the topics of common intercourse, is to be employed; so that when our more modern practitioners of blank verse do not touch the sublime, they frequently approach the ridiculous. Milton perfected non-dramatic blank verse and at the same time imposed limitations, very hard to break, upon the use to which it may be put if its greatest musical possibilities are to be exploited.

I now come to the point at which it is desirable to quote passages in illustration of what I have been saying about Milton's versification. It is best, I think, to take familiar passages, rather than to seek originality by choosing those which have been less often drawn to our attention. The first is the Invocation which opens Book III of *Paradise Lost*.

> Hail holy light, offspring of Heaven first-borne,
> Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam
> May I express thee unblam'd? Since God is light,
> And never but in unapproached light
> Dwelt from Eternitie, dwelt then in thee,
> Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
> Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal stream,
> Whose Fountain who shall tell? before the Sun,
> Before the Heavens thou wert, and at the voice
> Of God, as with a Mantle didst invest
> The rising world of waters dark and deep,
> Won from the void and formless infinite.

This passage is compact of Miltonic philosophy, but for that I must refer you to such critics as Professor Saurat and Mr. Lewis. For my purpose, it illustrates, first, Milton's power in the use of imagery of light. Second, it illustrates the closeness of the structure. If we were to attempt to analyse the Miltonic music line by line, that music would be lost: the individual line is right, not merely in itself, not merely in relation to the lines immediately preceding and following, but in relation to every other line in the passage. To extract this passage of twelve lines is to mutilate it. I contrast with this passage the following. In what I have just read there is no divagation from the point; the next passage is chosen to show Milton's skill in extending a period by introducing imagery which tends to distract us from the real subject.

Thus Satan talking to his neerest Mate
With Head uplift above the wave, and Eyes
That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides
Prone on the Flood, extended long and large
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian or *Earth-born*, that warr'd on *Jove*,
Briarios or *Typhon*, whom the Den
By ancient *Tarsus* held, or that Sea-beast
Leviathan, whom God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream:
Him haply slumbring on the *Norway* foam
The pilot of some small night-founder'd Skiff,[1]
Deeming some Island, oft, as Sea-men tell,
With fixed Anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night
Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delayes:
So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay
Chain'd on the burning Lake. . . .

There are, as often with Milton, criticisms of detail which could be made. I am not too happy about eyes that both blaze and sparkle, unless Milton meant us to imagine a roaring fire ejecting sparks: and that is *too* fiery an image for even supernatural eyes. The fact that the lake was burning somewhat diminishes the effect of the fiery eyes; and it is difficult to imagine a burning lake in a scene where there was only darkness visible. But with this kind of inconsistency we are familiar in Milton. What I wish to call to your attention is the happy introduction of so much extraneous matter. Any writer, straining for images of hugeness, might have thought of the whale, but only Milton could have included the anecdote of the deluded seamen without our wanting to put a blue pencil through it. We *nearly* forget Satan in attending to the story of the whale; Milton recalls us just in time. Therefore the diversion strengthens, instead of

[1] The term *night-foundered*, which I presume to be of Milton's invention, seems unsuitable here. Dr. Tillyard has called my attention to the use of the same adjective in *Comus*, i. 483:

Either som one like us night-foundered here

where, although extravagant, it draws a permissible comparison between travellers lost in the night, and seafarers in extremity. But when, as here in *Paradise Lost*, it is transferred from the travellers on land to adventurers by sea, and not to the men but to their *skiff*, the literal meaning of *founder* immediately presents itself. A *foundered* skiff could not be *moored*, to a whale or to anything else.

weakening, the passage. Milton plays exactly the same trick a few lines further on, when he speaks of Satan's shield:

> the broad circumference
> Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
> Through Optic Glass the *Tuscan* Artist views
> At Ev'ning from the top of *Fesole*,
> Or in *Valdarno*, to descry new Lands,
> Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.
> His Spear, to equal which the tallest pine
> Hewn on *Norwegian* hills, to be the Mast
> Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand. . . .

Here I think that the two sudden transitions, to the Tuscan astronomer and thence to the Norwegian pine, followed by the concentrated astonishing image of sea-power, are most felicitous. If I may put it in this way without being misunderstood, I find in such passages a kind of inspired *frivolity*, an enjoyment by the author in the exercise of his own virtuosity, which is a mark of the first rank of genius. Addison, whose opinion is quoted and confirmed by Johnson, said that *Paradise Lost* is 'universally and perpetually interesting'; the two critics found the source of this perpetual interest in the subject matter; but the assertion of Johnson that 'all mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves', even when it commands the assent of the Christian believer, will not wholly account for the absorbed attention which I think any poetry lover to-day ought to be able to give to the poem from end to end. I find the reason more certainly in the extraordinary style which because of its perpetual variety compels us to curiosity to know what is coming next, and in the perpetual surprises of reference such as those I have just quoted.

It may be observed also, that Milton employs devices of eloquence and of the word-play in which poets of his time were practised, which perpetually relieve the mind, and facilitate the declamation. Frequently the same word is happily repeated.

> My sentence is for open Warr: Of Wiles,
> More unexpert, I boast not: then let those
> *Contrive* who *need*, or when they *need*, not now.
> For while they *sit contriving*, shall the rest,
> Millions that stand in Arms, and longing wait
> The Signal to ascend, *sit* lingring here
> Heav'ns fugitives . . .[1]

[1] It might, of course, be objected that 'millions that *stand* in arms' could not at the same time '*sit* lingring'.

To give another instance:

> *Receive* him coming, to *receive* from us
> Knee-tribute still unpaid, prostration vile,
> Too much *to one*, but double how endur'd,
> *To one* and to his image now proclaim'd?

He also uses alliteration, and most effectively:

> Of midnight march, and hurried meeting here.

Of such devices, none is quite original; Milton's blank verse would not have been possible without developments which had taken place in the two generations preceding; but what Milton made from what he learned is unique. Some of these devices appear in the late plays in which Shakespeare returned to realize surprising possibilities of his earliest manner:

> 'Tis still a dream; or else such stuff as madmen
> Tongue, and brain not; either both, or nothing;
> Or senseless speaking, or a speaking such
> As sense cannot untie . . .
>
> Nobly he yokes
> A smiling with a sigh, as if the sigh
> Was that it was, for not being such a smile;
> The smile mocking the sigh, that it would fly
> From so divine a temple to commix
> With winds that sailors rail at.

The long and involved sentence structure is conspicuously developed by Massinger, from whom Milton may have taken a hint. I quote again a passage from Massinger which I quoted long ago in an essay on that dramatist:

> What though my father
> Writ man before he was so, and confirm'd it,
> By numbering that day no part of his life
> In which he did not service to his country;
> Was he to be free therefore from the laws
> And ceremonious forms in your decrees?
> Or else because he did as much as man
> In those three memorable overthrows,
> At Granson, Morat, Nancy, where his master,
> The warlike Charalois, with whose misfortunes
> I bear his name, lost treasure, men and life,
> To be excused from payment of those sums
> Which (his own patrimony spent) his zeal
> To serve his country forced him to take up?

The talent expended upon such a construction was, of course,

ill-applied to the theatre. The verse has got out of hand, for dramatic purposes; and its only possible future was through the genius of Milton.

I come at last to compare my own attitude, as that of a poetical practitioner perhaps typical of a generation twenty-five years ago, with my attitude to-day. I have thought it well to take matters in the order in which I have taken them: to discuss first the censures and detractions which I believe to have permanent validity, and which were best made by Johnson, in order to make clearer the causes, and the justification, for hostility to Milton on the part of poets at a particular juncture. And I wished to make clear those excellences of Milton which particularly impress me, before explaining why I think that the study of his verse might at last be of benefit to poets.

I have on several occasions suggested, that the important changes in the idiom of English verse which are represented by the names of Dryden and Wordsworth, may be characterized as successful attempts to escape from a poetic idiom which had ceased to have a relation to contemporary speech. This is the sense of Wordsworth's Prefaces. By the beginning of the present century another revolution in idiom—and such revolutions bring with them an alteration of metric, a new appeal to the ear—was due. It inevitably happens that the young poets engaged in such a revolution will exalt the merits of those poets of the past who offer them example and stimulation, and depreciate the merits of poets who do not stand for the qualities which they are zealous to realize. This is not only inevitable, it is right. It is even right, and certainly inevitable, that their practice, still more influential than their critical pronouncements, should attract their own readers to the poets by whose work they have been influenced. Such influence has certainly contributed to the taste, if we can distinguish the *taste* from the *fashion*, for Donne. I do not think that any modern poet, unless in a fit of irresponsible peevishness, has ever denied Milton's consummate powers. And it must be said that Milton's diction is not a poetic diction in the sense of being a debased currency: when he violates the English language he is imitating nobody, and he is inimitable. But Milton does, as I have said, represent poetry at the extreme limit from prose; and it was one of our tenets that verse should have the virtues of prose, that diction should become assimilated to cultivated contemporary speech, before aspiring to the elevation of poetry. Another tenet was that the subject-matter and the imagery of poetry should be

extended to topics and objects related to the life of a modern man or woman; that we were to seek the non-poetic, to seek even material refractory to transmutation into poetry, and words and phrases which had not been used in poetry before. And the study of Milton could be of no help: it was only a hindrance.

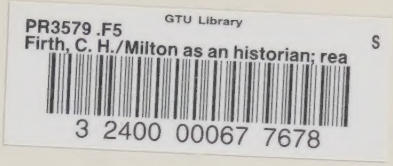
We cannot, in literature, any more than in the rest of life, live in a perpetual state of revolution. If every generation of poets made it their task to bring poetic diction up to date with the spoken language, poetry would fail in one of its most important obligations. For poetry should help, not only to refine the language of the time, but to prevent it from changing too rapidly: a development of language at too great a speed would be a development in the sense of a progressive deterioration, and that is our danger to-day. If the poetry of the rest of this century takes the line of development which seems to me, reviewing the progress of poetry through the last three centuries, the right course, it will discover new and more elaborate patterns of a diction now established. In this search it might have much to learn from Milton's extended verse structure; it might also avoid the danger of a *servitude* to colloquial speech and to current jargon. It might also learn that the music of verse is strongest in poetry which has a definite meaning expressed in the properest words. Poets might be led to admit that a knowledge of the literature of their own language, with a knowledge of the literature and the grammatical construction of other languages, is a very valuable part of the poet's equipment. And they might, as I have already hinted, devote some study to Milton as, outside the theatre, the greatest master in our language of freedom within form. A study of *Samson* should sharpen anyone's appreciation of the justified irregularity, and put him on guard against the pointless irregularity. In studying *Paradise Lost* we come to perceive that the verse is continuously animated by the departure from, and return to, the regular measure; and that, in comparison with Milton, hardly any subsequent writer of blank verse appears to exercise any freedom at all. We can also be led to the reflection that a monotony of unscannable verse fatigues the attention even more quickly than a monotony of exact feet. In short, it now seems to me that poets are sufficiently removed from Milton, and sufficiently liberated from his reputation, to approach the study of his work without danger, and with profit to their poetry and to the English language.

Date Due

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

CAT. NO. 23233

3579
F5



FIRTH

THE SCHUBERTH
BOOKBINDERY S.F.